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# Built Upon the Tower of Babel: Language Policy and the Clergy in Bourbon Mexico

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# Built Upon the Tower of Babel: Language Policy and the Clergy in Bourbon Mexico

**by**

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# Dedication

For Sman and Eogh

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# Built Upon the Tower of Babel: Language Policy and the Clergy in Bourbon Mexico

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This dissertation provides the first in-depth analysis of the "Bourbon language reforms"—a series of royal and ecclesiastical policies aimed at spreading the Spanish language in New Spain (now Mexico), enacted primarily between the 1750s and 1770s under the rule of the Bourbon dynasty. The limited scholarship on these reforms has assumed that a monolithic Bourbon state sought to mold a monolingual, Spanish-speaking empire. It has also suggested that creoles (American-born Spaniards), mendicants (Franciscan, Dominican and Augustinian friars), indigenous peoples, or some combination thereof responded by uniformly opposing the Bourbon state's oppressive measures. I challenge both of these arguments by analyzing the central Mexican Catholic Church's "language regime"—not only official policies, but also their historical context, and predominant ideologies about indigenous languages and their speakers—between 1700 and 1821. I demonstrate that indigenous languages were deeply integrated into the inner workings of the Church—not only its religious services, but also its bureaucracy and hierarchy. Native language competency helped to determine clerics' career paths, forge socioeconomic hierarchies within the Church, and shape political disputes between warring royal and ecclesiastical factions. This key role of native languages in the Church helped induce the Bourbon language reforms. In spite of the reform effort, however,

native languages continued to play a critical role in ecclesiastical administration through the end of the colonial period. This was due in large part to the fact that the Bourbon state did not seek uniformly to eradicate these languages; indeed, royal and ecclesiastical authorities could not even agree on precisely what their language policy should entail. Few priests (creole or not) felt the need to resist a reform effort that was contradictory, piecemeal, and of limited consequence for the Church. Contrary to many scholars' assumptions, these findings indicate that modern Mexico's linguistic inequality is not a persistent vestige of colonial policy. Instead, 18th-century language policy was only an early step in a centuries-long process leading to today's particular brand of linguistic discrimination.

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# Introduction

On 15 February 2016, as part of a special Mass in San Cristóbal de la Casas in the southern state of Chiapas, the Pope spoke Tzotzil. The news spread quickly among Mexican media outlets, which excitedly announced online that the ceremony had featured local indigenous languages prominently. Not only had participants read some parts of the Mass in three local languages—Ch'ol, Tzetzal, and Tzotzil—but the Pope himself had even begun his homily with a brief sentence in Tzotzil. In front of the heavily indigenous crowd, the Pope announced, "Li smantal Kajvaltike toj lek" ("The law of the Lord is perfect; it revives the soul"). He also used his visit to Chiapas as an opportunity to decree officially that priests could conduct Catholic liturgical ceremonies in indigenous languages.[1]

Both the Pope's announcement and his brief sentence in Tzotzil had a decidedly political slant: much of his San Cristóbal homily focused on denouncing the mistreatment of Mexico's native peoples and cultures. Recognizing the link, Chiapas crowds chanted

[1] Mónica Cruz, "Por qué es importante que el Papa haya hablado en una lengua indígena," *El País*, February 16, 2016, accessed March 1, 2016, http://verne.elpais.com/verne/2016/02/16/mexico/1455580084_463526.html; ""Perdón hermanos": reclamo indígena tiene respuesta del papa ," *CNNExpansión*, February 15, 2016, accessed March 1, 2016, http://www.cnnexpansion.com/economia/2016/02/15/francisco-pide-perdon-a-los-pueblos-indigenas; "El Papa llama a pedir perdón a indígenas, 'despojados por la cultura del descarte'," *Excelsior*, February 15, 2016, accessed March 1, 2016, http://www.excelsior.com.mx/nacional/2016/02/15/1075262; "Texto Íntegro: Homilía del Papa en Misa con indígenas de Chiapas," *El Universal*, February 15, 2016, accessed March 1, 2016, http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/especiales/nacion/2016/01/8/260946/nota/308179/5/texto-integro-homilia-del-papa-en-misa-con-indigenas-de-chiapas; "Autoriza Papa celebrar misas en lenguas indígenas," *La Jornada*, February 15, 2016, accessed March 1, 2016, http://www.jornada.unam.mx/ultimas/2016/02/15/autoriza-papa-celebrar-misas-en-lenguas-indigenas-2521.html.

in response: "We have a Pope on the side of the poor!"[2] Speaking Tzotzil during an important mass—even if only for a single sentence—was a momentous symbolic gesture in support of indigenous rights, and the rights of the poor. At a time when native tongues are regularly denigrated and excluded from public life simply for their association with indigenous peoples, the Pope's support for integrating these languages into Catholic ritual seemed almost revolutionary.

The Pope's actions were so powerful in part because, in the popular imagination, the Catholic Church and colonial state had banished native languages from religious rituals centuries ago, in the wake of Spain's 1521 conquest of Mexico. Indeed, in one of the Mexican press's many articles on the Pope's monumental gesture, a scholar explained that ecclesiastics had more or less exiled native tongues from Catholic life after the 16th century.[3] At first glance, there seems to be plenty of evidence to support his claim. For instance, Spanish grammarian Antonio de Nebrija's oft-cited refrain in 1492 that "language has always accompanied empire" would seem to confirm that the colonial Church and state had little tolerance for indigenous languages. So too would legislation. Royal and ecclesiastical authorities in Mexico and Spain released numerous orders from the 16th century onward calling for indigenous peoples to learn Spanish. These decrees became increasingly frequent and insistent under the reign of the Bourbon dynasty, which held the Spanish throne from 1700 until 1821. In 1770, King Charles III even ordered the extirpation of native languages throughout the Spanish Empire, and prohibited priests

[2] "Autoriza Papa celebrar misas."
[3] Cruz, "Por qué es importante."

from speaking them. By authorizing the use of these languages in Catholic ritual, Pope Francis seemed to be challenging a centuries-old hallmark of colonial oppression.

In contrast to this popular narrative that the colonial period erased native languages from the Catholic world, this dissertation demonstrates that these languages were deeply integrated into the Church, even up until Mexico declared independence from Spain in 1821. These languages were in fact so central to so many facets of ecclesiastical life that, in some ways, even the lives of priests who knew nothing more than Spanish and Latin were imbued with New Spain's diversity of languages. But many priests did speak a native tongue. The Pope would not likely have known a language like Tzotzil, but some highly esteemed churchmen would have. In fact, from the 1750s until the end of the colonial period, royal law required half of the revered ecclesiastics at the Collegiate Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe to know Nahuatl, Otomi or Mazahua—all common languages of central Mexico. When these highly ranked men spoke native languages in their Catholic ceremonies, no one would have seen it as a revolutionary symbolic gesture in support of indigenous rights. Rather, they were simply doing their jobs—with the backing of colonial policy, no less.

## THE BOURBON LANGUAGE REFORMS IN CONTEXT

This dissertation provides the first in-depth analysis of what I deem the "Bourbon language reforms" (or, alternatively, the "Bourbon Hispanization reforms"). I use these terms to describe a series of royal and ecclesiastical policies aimed at spreading the

Spanish language in New Spain, enacted primarily between the 1750s and 1770s. Authorities promoted these new policies during a period of dramatic political change. Starting when the Bourbon dynasty took the Spanish throne in 1700, but especially from the mid-18th century onward, the monarchs and ministers of this new dynasty undertook what historians now refer to as the Bourbon Reforms—a far-reaching series of dramatic policy changes in hopes of strengthening Spain's increasingly tenuous imperial power. The reform period reached its apex in the 1760s and 1770s, after incidents such as the 1762 fall of Havana and the 1763 cessation of Florida made clear that Spain was rapidly falling behind its imperial rivals.

Inspired by new ideologies of governance arising from the Spanish Enlightenment, Bourbon reformers sought to centralize authority, maximize bureaucratic efficiency, increase imperial revenues, and "improve" the Empire's citizenry. Royal policies adopted an increasingly interventionist tone, as reformers believed it was the monarch's responsibility to ensure *felicidad pública* (public happiness). Royal and ecclesiastical institutions that had for centuries operated with a considerable degree of autonomy became subject to a more centralized and hierarchical political structure, with the monarch at the top. Although many studies have shown that the Bourbon Reforms did not achieve anywhere near all of their aims, this was nevertheless unquestionably an era of transition.[4] Hispanization was but one of many new policies reformers promoted.

[4] An extensive body of scholarship has illustrated that Bourbon reformers were frequently unable to shape life in New Spain and other American viceroyalties to their liking. See for instance *John Lynch, Bourbon Spain, 1700-1808* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1989); *Anthony McFarlane, Colombia Before Independence: Economy, Society and Politics under Bourbon Rule* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Jordana Dym and Christophe Belaubre, eds. *Politics, Economy and Society in Bourbon*

Two Bourbon Reform goals are particularly relevant to the subject of language reform. First is reformers' project to limit the power of the Catholic Church. Since the earliest days of the colonial period, the Church and Crown had operated in tandem according to the *Dos Majestades* (Two Majesties) metaphor, with the monarch serving as the Empire's "father" and the Church as its "mother." This arrangement would change in the 18th century, however, as reformers found inspiration in regalism, a doctrine stating that the Church should be subjected to the authority of the monarch. Reformist ministers sought not to make the Empire less Catholic, but rather to reorder political authority; they saw a key role for the Church in molding a new, better citizenry, but they believed that the Crown, not the Church itself, should determine that role.

The Church reforms would affect both the regular and secular clergy. Beginning in the 1740s and 1750s, and initiated by one of King Ferdinand VI's ministers, the Marquis of Ensenada, royal officials sought to restrict the clergy's independence and redefine its role in public life.[5] Secular parish priests had traditionally been responsible not only for administering religious services, but also policing public morality. In contrast, reformers sought to limit these clerics' old judicial and administrative roles, reconstituting priests as a professional class of spiritual specialists. Ecclesiastical

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*Central America, 1759-1821* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2007); William B. Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred: Priests and Parishioners in Eighteenth-century Mexico* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996); Susan Deans-Smith, *Bureaucrats, Planters, and Workers: The Making of the Tobacco Monopoly in Bourbon Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992); Asunción Lavrin, *Brides of Christ: Conventual Life in Colonial Mexico* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008); and Oscar Mazín Gómez, *Entre dos majestades: El obispo y la iglesia del Gran Michoacán ante las reformas borbónicas, 1758-1772* (Zamora: El Colegio de Michoacán, 1987).

[5] Rodolfo Aguirre Salvador has shown that this initiative was rooted authorities's earlier efforts to reform the clergy in both Spain and New Spain. Rodolfo Aguirre Salvador, *Un clero en transición: población clerical, cambio parroquial y política eclesiástica en el arzobispado de México, 1700-1749* (México: UNAM, 2012).

authorities became increasingly likely to see parish priests as teachers instead of judges, responsible primarily for providing gentle, loving guidance rather than punishment. As part of this reconfiguration of priests' roles, prelates especially prioritized clerics' education.[6] As of the mid- to late-18th century, the ideal parish priest was learned, obedient, and had limited authority over the non-spiritual facets of parishioners' lives.

Officials also worked to rein in the power of the regular orders. The orders had traditionally operated with relative independence from the Church hierarchy. Consequently, many Bourbon reformers saw friars as too powerful, too wealthy, and too disobedient to royal authority.[7] Beginning in 1749, royal authorities ordered the removal of the mendicant friars (Franciscans, Dominicans and Augustinians) from most of their *doctrinas*, and in 1767 they expelled the entire Jesuit order from the Americas. Although these secularization measures were much more drastic than the changes imposed upon the secular clergy, all of these reforms were directed towards the same goal: subjecting ecclesiastical administration to the Crown's authority.

The second reform initiative relevant to the Hispanization laws is officials' effort to educate and thereby "improve" the Empire's indigenous peoples. Beginning in the mid-18th century, some of New Spain's bishops began to argue that they should assimilate natives into the rest of society. However, these prelates believed that, indigenous peoples were currently too "backward" to become full citizens; first, they

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[6] Taylor, *Magistrated of the Sacred*, 13-15 and 167-170.

[7] The regular orders were Catholic religious institutes whose members took special vows that were different than those taken by the secular (diocesan) clergy. With the notable exception of the Jesuits, most of the regular orders that operated in New Spain during the colonial period were mendicant orders, whose members took vows of poverty. The three most powerful mendicant orders in 18th-century New Spain were the Franciscans, Dominicans and Augustinians.

would first need an education, and reformed, "civilized" customs.[8] Two archbishops of Mexico, Manuel José Rubio y Salinas and Francisco Antonio de Lorenzana y Butrón, were especially strong proponents of indigenous education. These prelates thought natives should adopt Spanish dress, learn about science and the liberal arts, and abandon the vices (such as drunkenness and sexual promiscuity) that supposedly plagued native communities. These men, particularly Lorenzana, saw parish priests as critical to this educational endeavor: as representatives of Church and state who had frequent contact with indigenous peoples, clergymen were in an ideal position to teach natives to become more "rational."

Reformist prelates charged priests with the mission of improving indigenous peoples in part because religious reform was a key component of this civilizing project. Beginning in the 1760s, royal ministers, reformist bishops and many urban elites sought to replace the older, often grandiose baroque Catholicism with a new, more internal brand of Catholicism, called "new piety" or "enlightened piety." Baroque Catholicism relied heavily on external sensation for worship: it required mediation between people and God (via saints or holy objects); encouraged mass participation through large processions and feasts; and saw holy objects like relics as conduits for holy power. In contrast, the new brand of worship that reformers promoted was much more internal and austere. Proponents of the new piety rejected sensual stimulation, mediation and communality, in favor of individual spirituality, reason, moderation and discipline, and believed that

[8] Matthew D. O'Hara, *A Flock Divided: Race, Religion, and Politics in Mexico, 1749–1857* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 61.

Catholics must seek God through individual contemplation, rather than by socializing with others.[9] The noisy processions, miraculous images and collective celebrations that characterized most popular Catholicism in New Spain were the primary targets of the new piety movement.

Indigenous devotion was of especial concern to the prelates and officials who sought to reform Catholicism. Royal and ecclesiastical authorities tended to associate the most exuberant and external elements of baroque Catholicism with indigenous practices in particular. As Matthew O'Hara has demonstrated, reformist bishops thought that "Indian religious practice epitomized devotional errors that were widespread among plebeians of all castes."[10] As a result, reformers saw many indigenous religious celebrations as both spiritually and materially damaging: they distracted attention away from individual contemplation, and also wasted resources on activities that produced no income.[11]

In sum, by the 1760s, many royal officials and prelates sought to reform both the Church and indigenous peoples. These reformers saw native religious rituals, customs, dress and other facets of their culture as too backwards and too Indian. Despite priests' new limited role in public life, reformers relied on these men to reform indigenous

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[9] For more on the "new piety" in New Spain, see Brian R. Larkin, *The Very Nature of God: Baroque Catholicism and Religious Reform in Bourbon Mexico City* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2010); Pamela Voekel, *Alone Before God: The Religious Origins of Modernity in Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002); Elisa Luque Alcaide, "Reformist Currents in the Spanish-American Councils of the Eighteenth Century," *The Catholic Historical Review* 91 (2005); D. A. Brading, "Tridentine Catholicism and Enlightened Despotism in Bourbon Mexico," Journal of Latin American Studies 15 (1983); and O'Hara, *A Flock Divided*, 64-65.

[10] O'Hara, *A Flock Divided*, 66.

[11] *Ibid*., 61-71.

religious customs, and help them become more "rational" and "civlized." If clerics were to fulfill this critical role, they would need to be well educated and obedient to royal authority. Many of the same men who promoted these changes for the Church and indigenous peoples also pushed for language reform, albeit to varying degrees. As this dissertation demonstrates, Hispanization, the reorganization of ecclesiastical authority, and the project to remake indigenous peoples all grew out of the same ethos that inspired the other Bourbon Reforms.

I argue that indigenous languages were deeply integrated into the inner workings of New Spain's Catholic Church—not only its religious services, but also its bureaucracy, hierarchy, and career paths. Reformers who sought to spread the Spanish language in the mid- to late-18$^{th}$ century often complained that New Spain suffered from the same linguistic diversity—and, thus, the same confusion and disorder—as did the Biblical Babel. This linguistic pluralism imbued not only life in indigenous communities, but also the inner workings of the Church. Although churchmen normally used Spanish to communicate with one another and with royal authorities, native tongues factored heavily into social relationships both within the Church and between Church and state, simply because some priests knew an indigenous language while others did not. Native languages indexed difference in more ways than one: among ecclesiastics and royal authorities, native languages signified not only "Indianness," but also other undesirable traits associated with the kinds of priests most likely to speak these languages—namely, friars of the mendicant orders, and secular priests who were poor and undereducated. Native language competency helped to determine clerics' career paths, forge

socioeconomic hierarchies within the Church, and shape political disputes between warring royal and ecclesiastical factions. The Church did not always (or even often) promote outright a policy of multilingualism, but this only made native tongues more significant to the institution as a marker of difference within the clergy. In many ways, and much to reformers' collective chagrin, the Mexican Church was built upon a diversity of languages. Linguistic pluralism was integral to the institution's very structure.

This key role of native languages in the Catholic Church in many ways guided the formation, implementation and effects of language policy in the 18th century. It helped induce the Hispanization reforms during this period, because the aforementioned two types of clergymen who commonly spoke native languages fell out of favor among many royal and ecclesiastical authorities, who saw these priests as antithetical to their reformist aims. The language reforms altered some of the links between priests and native languages, and they also affected the way ecclesiastical authorities selected priests for parish posts. Native languages continued to play a critical role in ecclesiastical administration, however. This was largely due to the fact that the Bourbon state did not seek uniformly to eradicate these languages; indeed, royal and ecclesiastical authorities could not even agree on precisely what their language policy should entail. While many reformers believed that clerics' reliance on native tongues had become a problem, there was no consensus regarding what to do about it. Even at the end of the colonial period, New Spain's diversity of languages was built into the very fabric of the Mexican Church.

## THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF COLONIAL LANGUAGE POLICY

Language has long been a subject of interest among scholars of colonialism in multiple historical and regional contexts. One of the most common themes in these studies is the use of language as a tool of domination. Scholars of various regions have contended that agents of empire helped to establish colonial power using one of three methods: imposing their own languages upon dominated subjects; adapting indigenous tongues as tools of imperialism; or "producing knowledge" about native languages and subjecting them to European grammatical categories by writing grammar manuals.[12] Several studies have made such arguments about colonial Mexico.[13] Some scholars of "language ideologies" (a term I will discuss further later on) have warned against imposing narrative of imperial domination upon historical actors' linguistic ideas and patterns of language use: what might now appear as a move towards colonial dominance was in many cases intended rather differently.[14] In spite of this warning, historians and anthropologists who study language and colonialism have consistently returned to domination as the primary explanation for colonizers' interactions with language.

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[12] Bernard S. Cohn, "The Command of Language and the Language of Command," in Genealogies of Orientalism: History, Theory, Politics, eds. Edmund Burke III and David Prochaska; Joseph Errington, "Colonial Linguistics," Annual Review of Anthropology 30 (2001); Errington, *Linguistics in a Colonial World: A Story of Language, Meaning, and Power* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008); C.A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

[13] Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, and Colonization* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995); Errington, "Colonial Linguistics"; Errington, *Linguistics in a Colonial World*; William F. Hanks, *Converting Words:Maya in the Age of the Cross* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010); Alan Durston, *Pastoral Quechua: The History of Christian Translation in Colonial Peru, 1550-1650* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007).

[14] Kathryn A. Woolard, "Bernardo de Aldrete and the Morisco Problem: A Study in Early Modern Spanish Language Ideology," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44:3 (2002): 448-449.

For scholars of colonial Spanish America in particular, the history of language has been a burgeoning field for the past few decades. Histories of language in this period fall into three broad categories. First, beginning with James Lockhart's work in the 1970s, Mexicanists of the influential "New Philology" school have written social and cultural histories of various indigenous groups by analyzing linguistic patterns in mundane native-language documentation.[15] Second, philological studies of evangelization methods have also received substantial scholarly attention in recent decades, particularly from anthropologists. These works focus primarily on priests' religious writings in indigenous languages.[16] A number of them echo the domination-based themes of the broader scholarship on language and colonialism.[17] Finally, scholars of colonial Peru have shown significant interest in both Spanish and indigenous literacy in recent years, following in the footsteps of Ángel Rama's *The Lettered City*, which argued that Peru's Spanish intellectuals and bureaucrats gained substantial power from their control over the written

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[15] In contrast to an older historiography that often marginalized and made generalizations about indigenous experiences, New Philologists' focus on language and indigenous sources has allowed them to re-center their narratives on indigenous perspectives, and to differentiate between various linguistic and cultural groupings (Nahuas, Mixtecs, Zapotecs, and so on). As Matthew Restall has put it, "in non-native eyes, the natives of central Mexico had for almost five centuries been Indians. [Lockhart's work] made them Nahuas again." Matthew Restall, "A History of the New Philology and the New Philology in History," *Latin American Research Review* 38 (2003), 118.

[16] See for instance Louise Burkhart, *The Slippery Earth: Nahua-Christian Moral Dialogue in Sixteenth-Century Mexico* (Tuscon: University of Arizona Press, 1989).

[17] By examining the ways that churchmen in colonial Mexico and Peru translated the faith into native tongues for their native flocks, these studies have revealed not only the complexities of evangelization, but also some of the linguistic aims of ecclesiastics in these regions. For instance, Alan Durston has shown that priests in colonial Peru developed a standardized version of Quechua—which he calls "Pastoral Quechua"—which they saw as more "pure" than the versions of the language that natives used in their day-to-day lives. He argues that, in doing so, these ecclesiastics hoped to facilitate indigenous subordination to Church and Crown. William Hanks has made a similar argument for the Yucatan region of southeastern Mexico, where priests created a new form of the Maya language that he calls the "*lengua reducida*." Much like Durston, Hanks asserts that churchmen undertook this linguistic project as a means to colonization. Durston, *Pastoral Quechua* and Hanks, *Converting Words*.

word.[18] Other recent significant contributions to the history of language in colonial Spanish America that are outside these three categories include a 2012 issue of *Ethnohistory* devoted to the many uses of the Nahuatl language in early colonial Mexico, and an edited collection on language in the Andes that seeks to merge the findings and methodologies of historians with those of linguists.[19]

Despite this substantial interest in the history of language use, translation and literacy, colonial language policy has received very little scholarly attention. Historians' forays into the subject have been piecemeal and minimal. Studies of the Church often address language policy briefly, as do histories of education.[20] Monographs and edited collections on language policy in Mexico frequently include a chapter or two on the colonial period.[21] There also exist a handful of journal articles on the subject; Mexican

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[18] Ángel Rama, *The Lettered City*, ed. and trans. John Charles Chasteen (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996). A number of recent studies have explored the relationships between literacy and Andean politics. By problematizing the often-rigid concepts of authorship and literacy, these works have challenged Rama's work, expanding the "lettered city" to include indigenous peoples and mestizos. These scholars have shown that, by way of various, sometimes non-textual forms of literacy, natives and mestizos participated in colonial culture, and—as Alcira Dueñas argues—sometimes used their literary abilities to denounce Spanish corruption. Alcira Dueñas, *Indians and Mestizos in the "Lettered City"* (Sebastopol: University Press of Colorado, 2011); Joanne Rappaport and Tom Cummins, *Beyond the Lettered City: Indigenous Literacies in the Andes* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014); and Frank Salomon and Mercedes Niño-Murcia, *The Lettered Mountain: A Peruvian Village's Way with Writing* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

[19] *Ethnohistory* 59:4 (2012) and Paul Heggarty and Adrian J. Pearce, eds. *History and Language in the Andes* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011).

[20] Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred*; O'Hara, *A Flock Divided*; Aguirre Salvador, *Un clero en transición*; D. A. Brading, *Church and State in Bourbon Mexico: The Diocese of Michoacán, 1749-1810* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Dorothy Tanck de Estrada, *Pueblos de indios y educación en el México colonial, 1750-1821* (México: El Colegio de México, 1999); Pilar Gonzalbo Aizpuru, *Historia de la educación en la época colonial: el mundo* indígena (México: Colegio de México, 1990); Luisa Zahino Peñafort, *Iglesia y sociedad en México, 1765-1800: tradición, reforma y reacciones* (México: UNAM, 1996).

[21] Shirley Brice Heath, *Telling Tongues: Language Policy in Mexico, Colony to Nation* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1972); Linda King, *Roots of Identity: Language and Literacy in Mexico* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994); Nelsy Echávez-Solano and Kenya C. Dworkin y Méndez, eds., *Spanish and Empire* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2007); Margarita Hidalgo, ed., *Mexican Indigenous*

historians, in particular, have published a number of Spanish-language pieces on language policy and the Church.[22] However, there is currently no monograph in existence devoted entirely, or even primarily, to language policy in any part of colonial Spanish America. As a result, historians have only a narrow understanding of how and why royal and ecclesiastical authorities enacted new language policies in the 18th century, and whether and why these policies succeeded or failed. It is thus unsurprising that in the popular imagination (and in the minds of many scholars), native languages were inconsequential to the Catholic Church after the 16th century. Although a handful of studies suggest that this narrative is incorrect, these works are few and far between, and their discussions of language policy are usually brief.

The limited historiography on colonial language policy has made the following arguments regarding the 18th-century Hispanization reforms. Many scholars see these reforms as a Bourbon tool for imposing uniformity upon a diverse population; they assert that royal authorities promoted Hispanization in order to facilitate secularization, attack the creole (American-born Spanish) clergy, or help "civilize" indigenous peoples.[23] Some

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*Languages at the Dawn of the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2006); Beatriz Garza Cuarón, *Politicas lingüísticas en Mexico* (México: UNAM, 1997).

[22] Rodolfo Aguirre Salvador, "La demanda de clérigos "lenguas" del arzobispado de México, 1700-1749," *Estudios de Historia Novohispana* 35 (2006) ; María Bono López, "La política lingüística en la Nueva España," *Anuario Mexicano de Historia del Derecho* 9 (1997); Bono López, "Las reformas borbónicas en la materia lingüística en la Nueva España*," Isla de Arriarán: Revista Cultural y Científica* 14 (1999); Beatriz Garza Cuarón, "Políticas lingüísticas hacia la Nueva España en el siglo XVIII," *Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica* 39:2 (1991); David Charles Wright Carr, "La política lingüística en la Nueva España," *Acta Universitaria (Universidad de Guanajuato)* 17:3 (2007); Mark Morris, "Language in the Service of the State: The Nahuatl Counterinsurgency Broadsides of 1810," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 87 (2007).

[23] Bono López, "Las reformas borbónicas" ; Gonzalbo Aizpuru, *Historia de la educación*; Heath, *Telling Tongues*; King, *Roots of Identity*; Morris, "Language in the Service of the State"; Tanck de Estrada, *Pueblos de indios y educación*; Sajid Alfredo Herrera, "Primary Education in Bourbon San Salvador and

studies argue that the language reforms worked, while others assert that they failed, due to resistance from indigenous peoples, the creole clergy (who were more likely than peninsular Spaniards to know the local languages), or both.[24] Some scholars have attributed language policy failures in both the early and late colonial periods to a natural divide between the metropole's imperial designs and practical needs on the ground.[25] Others argue that while the Hapsburg-dynasty monarchs of the 16th and 17th centuries were tolerant of their colonies' linguistic diversity, the Bourbon reformist ethos in the 18th century required a monolingual empire instead.[26]

Although some of these studies' findings conflict with one another, nearly every one shares a common denominator: they rely primarily if not entirely on royal and ecclesiastical policies themselves, particularly the laws and pastoral letters of monarchs and prelates who stipulated rules for priests' and indigenous peoples' language use.[27] Some also incorporate a select few petitions against secularization or other minor evidence of protests against the Hispanization laws. Lacking any in-depth studies on language policy that utilize a broader range of documents from a broader range of perspectives, scholars who have broached the subject of language reform have mostly had to rely on contextual clues and educated conjecture to determine its impetus and

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Sonsonate, 1750-1808," in *Politics, Economy and Society*, eds. Dym and Belaubre, 17-45; Juan R. Lodares, "Languages, Catholicism, and Power in the Hispanic Empire (1500-1770)," in Spanish and Empire, eds. Echávez-Solano and Dworkin y Méndez, 3-31.

[24] Bono López, "La política linguistica" and "Las reformas borbónicas" ; Garza Cuarón, "Políticas lingüísticas"; Gonzalbo Aizpuru, *Historia de la educación*; Heath, *Telling Tongues*; King, *Roots of Identity*; Lodares, "Languages, Catholicism, and Power"; Morris, "Language in the Service of the State"; Tanck de Estrada, *Pueblos de indios y educación*.

[25] Garza Cuarón, "Políticas lingüísticas" and Zahino Peñafort, *Iglesia y sociedad*.

[26] Lodares, "Languages, Catholicism, and Power" and Morris, "Language in the Service of the State."

[27] Notable exceptions include Aguirre Salvador, "La demanda de clérigos" and *Un clero en transición*; Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred*; and Tanck de Estrada, *Pueblos de indios*.

results. As a result, most of these works provide the impression that a monolithic Bourbon state sought to mold a monolingual, Spanish-speaking empire, and that either creoles, mendicants, indigenous peoples, or some combination thereof responded by uniformly opposing the Bourbon state's oppressive measures.

Recent historiography on colonialism, imperial institutions, the priesthood and indigenous peoples indicates that this conception of language reform as a simple competition between the colonial state on the one hand and various interest groups on the other is too simplistic: this narrative suggests a one-dimensional rigid dichotomy between ruler and ruled, and an unrealistic uniformity of opinion and action on the part of the state, the clergy, and various ethnic groups. Recent scholarship has moved beyond and indeed challenged these outdated understandings of colonial Spanish America. As Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler have argued, "colonial regimes were neither monolithic nor omnipotent."[28] Instead, the motley crew of monarchs, ministers and bureaucrats that comprised the colonial state often had competing motives and agendas, and did not always agree on how to achieve their goals. Actions undertaken by royal agents were not always part of a considered policy of the state.[29] Even when royal law insisted on a particular policy, disagreements among royal authorities were frequent, and officials did not always comply to the letter of the law.[30]

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[28] Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, "Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda," in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, eds. Cooper and Stoler, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 6.

[29] See for instance Ann Twinam, *Purchasing Whiteness: Pardos, Mulattos, and the Quest for Social Mobility in the Spanish Indies* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), 29-30.

[30] See for instance Christopher Rosenmüller, *Patrons, Partisans, and Palace Intrigues: The Court Society of Colonial Mexico, 1702-1710* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2008).

Just as the Spanish state was not homogenous, neither were indigenous peoples or the creole clergy. Studies on the 18th-century Church have shown that the clergy's experiences, identities, allegiances, and responses to royal incursions were complex and varied. Although the Bourbon Reforms complicated the lives of many churchmen, not all of them resisted the new orders, and many remained loyal to the Crown.[31] Indigenous responses to royal policies also varied widely, and rarely fit neatly into the categories of "accommodation" or "resistance."[32] Moreover, scholarship on indigenous cultures has shown that the broad category of "Indian" was itself enormously diverse, encompassing a vast array of different cultures and social strata.[33] The historiography of the past three decades on colonial Spanish America indicates that the Hispanization narrative suggested by previous studies oversimplifies the state, the clergy, and indigenous groups alike. There simply has not been enough research on the subject to bring scholars' understanding of language policy in line with recent historiography on colonial Spanish America more broadly.

By providing the first in-depth analysis of Bourbon language policy, this dissertation overturns this simplistic conception of the language reforms. I make five contributions to the literature on this subject. First, even if hardly worthy of admiration,

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[31] Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred* and Mazín Gómez, *Entre dos majestades*.

[32] Brian P. Owensby, *Empire of Law and Indian Justice in Colonial Mexico* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008); David T. Garret, *Shadows of Empire: The Indian Nobility of Cusco, 1750-1825* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); David J. Weber, *Bárbaros: Spaniards and their Savages in the Age of Enlightenment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005); Camila Townsend, *Malintzin's Choices: An Indian Woman in the Conquest of Mexico*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006.

[33] Garrett, *Shadows of Empire*; James Lockhart, *The Nahuas after the Conquest: A Social and Cultural History of the Indians of Central Mexico, Sixteenth Through Eighteenth Centuries*( Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992); Kevin Terraciano, *The Mixtecs of Colonial Oaxaca: Ñudzahui History, Sixteenth Through Eighteenth Centuries* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001).

the motives behind language reform were far more sophisticated than previous studies have suggested. Hispanization was certainly linked to other reform goals, but it was not simply a tool for bolstering secularization or indigenous "progress," nor a sort of sub-reform of these other initiatives. Rather, secularization, clerical reform, indigenous "improvement" and Hispanization all emerged out of the same reformist ethos that sought a total transformation of the way the Spanish Empire functioned. Thus, the logic behind language reform was rooted not in a single motivation, but in a tangled web of Enlightenment philosophies, political ideas and religious goals. The proponents of radical Hispanization in the late 1760s and early 1770s in particular saw language reform as just one component of a much larger project to rethink the social relations, political organization and religious culture that comprised the very foundations of the viceroyalty. Assertions that officials pursued Hispanization in order to encourage secularization or impose uniformity upon indigenous peoples are not wrong, but neither do they capture the complexity of the endeavor, nor the significance of language policy within the Bourbon Reforms.

Second, royal officials and prelates did not uniformly support language reform, and even those who concurred that indigenous peoples should learn Spanish could not agree about the best means to achieve this. It was clear to most reformers that language usage had an important role to play in achieving their new vision of empire. However, to many it was unclear precisely what that role should be. Even some of the major proponents of Hispanization fought hard to ensure that some priests—particularly those at the Collegiate Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe—could speak a native language. The

idea that native tongues should be eliminated and all priests should immediately cease speaking them was radical, and was limited to a small handful of prelates and officials who were in power in the late 1760s and early 1770s. Most other reformist authorities disagreed with this approach. Although for simplicity's sake I occasionally refer to "the Hispanization initiative" or "the language reform effort," the language reforms were in fact decidedly plural; neither royal nor ecclesiastical authorities ever came to a consensus regarding what precisely New Spain's language policy should be, and thus a variety of approaches abounded.

Third, these disagreements regarding what language policy even entailed make it next to impossible to gauge any policy's success or failure. Indigenous peoples and priests alike certainly continued to use native languages through to Independence, but few reformers sought the complete extirpation of these languages anyway. The radical Hispanization proposed by prelates and royal officials in the late 1760s and early 1770s was partially successful: although they did not manage to banish native languages from ecclesiastical administration, they did reduce significantly the role of these languages in selecting priests for parish positions. These reformers did not achieve their broader reform goals, however. These prelates and royal officials had assumed that because many clerics who spoke native languages were undereducated, eliminating language competency as a required skill would lead to a more learned parish clergy. This assumption turned out to be wrong, and thus clerics with limited education continued to attain parish posts into the early 19$^{th}$ century.

Fourth, despite the fact that creole priests were more likely than peninsular ones to know an indigenous language, the Hispanization reforms did not elicit uniform resistance from the creole clergy. This was in part because there was not much to protest, and in part because creoles simply did not all agree on the matter. Despite reducing the role of language competency in selecting priests for parish posts, the Hispanization reforms did not significantly affect priests' careers, regardless of their birthplace. As I mentioned above, priests with limited academic accolades could still find work. Many priests relied on their language competency to help them achieve ordination, fill gaps in their educational backgrounds, or demonstrate their commitment to their calling. This changed surprisingly little after 1770; even in the late 18th century, language skills still often proved useful to clerics' careers. Therefore, even priests who relied on their linguistic abilities for their livelihood had little reason to protest the Hispanization reforms. Moreover, creole identity does not appear to have determined one's support for or against the language reforms, even amongst the royal and ecclesiastical officials who felt strongly about the matter.

Finally, I challenge the oft-repeated contention that royal authorities and priests spoke native languages, wrote grammars, or imposed language policies exclusively for the purpose of colonial domination. Native languages played multiple roles in society and were thus associated with more than just indigenous ethnicity or colonized status. Consequently, language policies of this period cannot be categorized simply as favoring or rejecting colonial domination. Moreover, neither royal officials, nor clergymen, nor Peninsular or Creole priests had uniform ideas about languages, and none of them

responded to the Bourbon language reforms in homogenous ways. Rather, a broad spectrum of motivations, ranging from political to personal, determined how agents of empire used ideas about language. While power relations between colonizer and colonized certainly played a role in shaping language policy, many other factors were at play, and priests who spoke native languages did not always do so with imperial designs in mind.

**Methods**

My research questions are inspired primarily by scholarship on Language Policy and Planning (LPP). LPP began in the 1950s as a branch of sociolinguistics, and it is still rooted primarily in the methods of sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology. In recent decades, however, it has grown into a multidisciplinary field that has expanded to include the perspectives of economists, geographers, historians and psychologists.[34] Although I am trained in neither sociolinguistics nor linguistic anthropology, LPP offers sophisticated theoretical approaches to language policy that have been critical in shaping this project.

Two theoretical orientations from LPP drive my approach to studying Bourbon language policy. First is the concept of "language ideology," which sociolinguists and linguistic anthropologists have used for decades (especially since the 1990s) to explain beliefs about languages and their speakers. Inspired primarily by Kathryn Woolard's use

[34] For introductions to the history of LPP and its interdisciplinary methods, see Thomas Ricento, ed., *An Introduction to Language Policy: Theory and Method* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006) and David Cassels Johnson, *Language Policy* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013).

of the term, I define language ideologies as ties between languages and politics, social stratification, economics, race, and other elements of human society.[35] The term refers to the social meanings that languages accumulate as a result of their association with certain groups of people. That is, when we hear a language, we make assumptions about the speaker and the language itself based on our own biases, prejudices and cultural assumptions that we associate with the speaker. For instance, many Texans today might associate Spanish with undocumented immigration status, Mexican food, and/or the state's changing demographics, to name just a few possibilities. They would also make assumptions about the speaker and/or the language based on these associations. These beliefs about language and its speakers are often unconscious and naturalized; we all partake in, forge, and reinforce language ideologies, whether we realize it or not. Many LPP scholars see these ideologies as integral to understanding language policy.[36] In order to understand how a language policy functions and why it succeeds or fails, we need first to understand what the language in question means to people—the associations the language has acquired as a result of its cultural, social, political and economic context.

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[35] Kathryn A. Woolard, "Language Ideology as a Field of Inquiry," in *Language Ideologies : Practice and Theory*, eds. Bambi B. Schieffelin, Kathryn A. Woolard and Paul V. Kroskrity (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 3-47.

[36] Ricento, *An Introduction to Language Policy* and Johnson, *Language Policy*. Similarly, Harold Schiffman has argued that it is impossible to study language policy effectively without also examining the "linguistic culture" surrounding it. Harold F. Schiffman, *Linguistic Culture and Language Policy* (New York: Routledge, 1996). Some LPP scholars, most notably Teresa McCarty, see language ideologies and language practices as not only critical to the study of language policy, but actually part of the definition of language policy itself. This broad definition of policy is helpful in that it accommodates a broad definition of power; it helps scholars see that a variety of practices at multiple levels of society—not just laws enacted by government officials—help regulate language use. Teresa L. McCarty, *Ethnography and Language Policy* (New York: Routledge, 2014). Like many others, however, I have chosen instead to view language policy as distinct from language ideology, to more clearly distinguish between action and belief, and between individuals with substantial power and those without.

The second theoretical approach I borrow from LPP centers on "language regimes." Originating in political scientist Jane Jenson's work on "citizenship regimes," Linda Cardinal and Selma Sonntag recently repurposed the term to analyze language policy.[37] Cardinal and Sonntag use the term "language regimes" to refer to language practices and conceptions of language "as projected through state policies and as acted upon by language users."[38] Language regimes have enormous breadth: they comprise not only language laws or policies, but also the historical context that led to the creation of those laws, and the ways that people use language and interact with language policies. Whereas many LPP studies focus primarily on the effects of language policies—whether they succeed or fail, and why—the concept of language regimes has allowed recent scholars to turn their attention to the context around and impetus behind those policies as well. This has allowed these LPP scholars to better understand how and why language policies emerge.

Central to Cardinal and Sonntag's conception of language regimes is a political science concept called "state traditions"—the traditions of policymaking and governance that constitute the history of a state. This theoretical framework assumes that states make

[37] A citizenship regime defines what citizenship means and how it functions. According to Jenson, it sets the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion for political communities, prescribes the "democratic rules of the game" for a polity, contributes to the definition of the nation and nationality, and sets the geographical borders for the political community. The "regime" thus defines what citizenship means and how it functions. Significantly, Jenson sees these regimes as comprising not only state institutions and their rules, but also "a certain understanding of citizenship that informs the state's decision-making and commitments as well as the way citizens give meaning to their claims." In other words, the meaning of citizenship arises from the actions and ideas of both state and citizens. Jane Jenson and Martin Papillon, "Challenging the Citizenship Regime: The James Bay Cree and Transnational Action," Politics & Society 28:2 (2000): 246 and Linda Cardinal and Selma K. Sonntag, "State Traditions and Language Regimes: Conceptualizing Language Policy Choices," in *State Traditions and Language Regimes* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press), 6.

[38] Cardinal and Sonntag, "State Traditions and Language Regimes," 6.

policy decisions based on "path dependency," such that a state's traditions shape (but do not determine) its possibilities for policymaking. Major policy changes do not occur until the state experiences a "critical juncture," which is usually precipitated by a social, political, economic or environmental crisis, or other dramatic changes.[39] According to Cardinal and Sonntag, these state traditions "guide and frame" language regimes, while language users act on them.[40] Language policies are part of language regimes: the regime helps shape both the policy and its results. Understanding a language policy therefore requires first understanding the regime in which that policy exists.

I concur with Cardinal and Sonntag's assertion that language ideologies are most useful for studying language policies if we examine them as a component of regimes. Language regimes essentially comprise the historical context and power relations from which ideologies emerge.[41] In a sense, language regimes are ideologies with both the state and historical context added in: the regime comprises the accumulated social meaning of a language (among both state agents and citizens), the language laws enacted by the state, and the state traditions that gave rise to those very laws and social meanings. The concept of regimes encourages scholars to acknowledge both the power of the state and the fact that it did not hold complete control over language ideologies or language use; these power relations must be understood as subject to the traditions, understandings and struggles of various historical actors. Analyzing language regimes—and, within

[39] *Ibid*., 5.
[40] *Ibid*., 6.
[41] *Ibid*., 7-9.

them, language ideologies—provides a means for looking beyond law, to the vast array of historical factors that shape the ways people understood, used, and legislated language.

I derived the questions driving this dissertation primarily from scholarship on language regimes and ideologies. What were the defining features of the language regime in Bourbon New Spain? What language ideologies circulated among churchmen and royal authorities? Did the language regime change over the course of the Bourbon reforms—and if so, how? How did the language regime (and within it, language ideologies) shape the Hispanization reforms and the effects of those reforms? In sum: how and why did the language reforms arise, how did they affect ecclesiastical administration, and why did they succeed or fail?

Although the questions guiding this dissertation are LPP questions, I answer them using historical methodologies. I have drawn inspiration primarily from the "emic approach," and from the methods of social historians E.P. Thompson and William Taylor. Both Thompson and Taylor see categories like "class" and "the state" not as things in of themselves, but rather as patterns resulting from human relationships. In his classic studies of the working class and cultural hegemony in 18$^{th}$-century England, Thompson criticized previous historians for imposing their own categories and understandings upon historical actors, thereby misjudging and skewing their actions. Because he saw class as something that happens as a result of ever-shifting social relationships, Thompson contended that the best way to analyze the category "working class" was to examine the people who belonged to that social group. "We cannot have love without lovers, nor deference without squires and labourers," Thompson contended. Therefore, "class

happens when some men, as a result of common experiences (inherited or shared), feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs."[42] In other words, according to Thompson, the best way to understand class is to focus on the people who forged and enacted class categories.

William Taylor has applied a similar approach to colonial Mexico. Following in Thompson's footsteps, Taylor argued in the 1980s that historians of colonial Latin America needed to examine the role of the state "in terms of relationships and structures that mediated between local groups and global processes, relationships that often were hidden behind what would appear on a chart of offices and duties."[43] In contrast to previous studies that had either depicted the state as all-powerful or eschewed the state altogether, he suggested that an approach focused on social relationships would account for the fact that "most people are in some sense both rulers and ruled."[44] Following his own advice, Taylor's later study of parish priests in Bourbon Mexico used interactions between clerics, their parishioners, and royal and ecclesiastical authorities as a lens for examining public life during the transitions wrought by the Bourbon Reforms. Highlighting distinctions within the clergy where possible, Taylor depicted priests not as mere extensions of the Church, but rather as people with numerous and sometimes

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[42] E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1964), 9. See also E. P. Thompson, "Patrician Society, Plebeian Culture," *Journal of Social History* 7:4 (1974): 382-405.
[43] William B. Taylor, "Between Global Process and Local Knowledge: An Inquiry into Early Latin American Social History, 1500-1900," in *Reliving the Past: The Worlds of Social History*, ed. Olivier Zunz (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 165.
[44] *Ibid*., 145.

conflicting needs, desires, struggles and allegiances.[45] I seek to do the same, not only for priests, but also for the various royal and ecclesiastical officials who formulated and implemented language policy. My project is not strictly a social history: the sources I have used in some chapters pertain more to intellectual or political history than to social history. However, in all cases, Thompson and Taylor's method—to study history by focusing on relationships between people, rather than on categories of analysis—has informed my analyses of those sources.

I combine Taylor and Thompson's methodologies with an "emic" approach, which, I would argue, complements these two historians' priorities. Originating in linguistics and anthropology but frequently adopted by historians, the emic method "privileges the sources, letting them suggest the theme to be studied…" In contrast, an etic methodology "utilizes themes developed by historians or social scientists to guide the research agenda."[46] While an etic technique takes scholarly analysis as the starting point for research, the emic method begins with whatever the documents say, in hopes of understanding the topic at hand from historical actors' own perspectives. Just as Thompson and Taylor warn historians against imposing our own categories and understandings upon the people we study, so too do proponents of the emic approach.

Although they emerged from very different disciplines, the emic approach and Taylor and Thompson's social history methods fit well with my focus on language regimes and language ideologies. Together, these approaches advocate a methodology

[45] Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred*.
[46] Twinam, *Purchasing Whiteness*, 36.

that prioritizes historical context and relationships between historical actors above all else. Therefore, I examine New Spain's language regime by exploring the language ideologies that priests and royal and ecclesiastical authorities drew upon in their interactions with one another. I see these ideologies as not only playing a role in relationships between (and among) these different social groups, but also as arising from these same relationships. I have sought to take into account the effects of power relations upon these relationships and upon the language regime, but to do so without assuming that these power relations determined the course of history. At the same time, I have tried to let the documents do the talking, letting them guide my analysis, so that the language regime I describe is more or less as historical actors would have understood it. I have also sought to treat all historical actors—priests, bureaucrats and high-ranking authorities alike—as humans with complex and sometimes contradictory motives, whose actions arose from their historical context, individual situations, and relationships with others more than from their institutional affiliations. In sum, this project prioritizes people and their own experiences and perceptions above all else. In doing so, it shows that language regimes (and the ideologies within) arose from a series of complex relationships between various historical actors.

## FOCUS

I have centered my analysis not only on language policy, but specifically on its relation to the colonial clergy. I study the language policy and the priesthood in tandem

for two reasons. First, priests and language policy were almost unavoidably connected with one another. Language laws invariably targeted not only indigenous peoples, but also priests. For instance, as stated previously, Charles III's 1770 Hispanization law ordered clerics to cease speaking to parishioners in native tongues. This is unsurprising, given priests' critical position in colonial society. Because of the close relationship between Church and state, priests served not only as spiritual brokers in New Spain's communities, but also as local representatives of the state, and, often, as linguistic intermediaries. Taylor explains that, "as a moral and spiritual father and literate local resident able to speak the native language of his parishioners, the curate was well placed to represent the requirements of the state to rural people and interpret their obligations, as well as to carry their interests to higher authorities."[47] Given priests' key positions as mediators who often learned their parishioners' languages in order to fulfill their duties, language policies could hardly avoid addressing these men in addition to indigenous peoples.

The second reason I examine the clergy and language policy together is closely related to the first: the clergy is a useful focus for studying the workings of the colonial state and its policies. Three decades ago, Taylor suggested four potential avenues for examining the colonial state and its relationship with society at large. One of these was to study power brokers—people with influence, and/or mediators between state and people. For precisely the reasons I mentioned above, he saw priests as an ideal focus. As men who "occupied critical intersections between the majority of rural people and higher

[47] Taylor, "Between Global Process and Local Knowledge," 149.

authorities," clergymen were some of the most important power brokers and mediators in colonial society.[48] Therefore, their documented interactions with royal and ecclesiastical authorities provide a valuable window into social relationships, and into both the causes and effects of language policy changes during the Bourbon Reform period.

Despite my focus on native languages, indigenous peoples themselves—and their roles in, and perspectives on, language reform—are conspicuously missing from much of this project. Royal legislation and ecclesiastical reform policies regarding language during the 18th century often targeted both clergymen and indigenous peoples. Reformers sought not only to reduce the role of native languages in ecclesiastical administration, but also to found schools where natives could learn Spanish, and to ensure that local indigenous officials knew Spanish. However, I have chosen to focus primarily on the ways these reforms affected (and were affected by) clergymen, rather than natives, as examining Hispanization in indigenous communities would have ballooned this project well beyond the bounds of a dissertation.

A select few scholars have already conducted excellent preliminary analyses of native responses to language reform. These studies indicate that the Hispanization reforms affected indigenous life, but that many (or perhaps most) natives did not know Spanish even by the end of the colonial period. For instance, María Bono López, Luisa Zahino Peñafort, and Dorothy Tanck de Estrada have shown that many indigenous peoples either showed no interest in learning Spanish or outright resisted it, sometimes

[48] *Ibid*., 148.

even going so far as refusing to send their children to Spanish-language schools.[49] Moreover, Yanna Yannakakis has demonstrated that Hispanization laws affected local elections in Oaxaca but did not shape them. Although officials sometimes invoked these laws to rectify messy political situations, most indigenous elected candidates still did not know Spanish by the early 1790s.[50]

Although I focus primarily on the clergy rather than indigenous peoples, I have weaved native perspectives into this project's narrative where possible. To do so, I have relied primarily on native litigation against parish priests, in which petitioners or witnesses complained of their priest's inability to speak their language. Sometimes this was natives' primary complaint. At other times, however, indigenous communities appear to have mentioned their cleric's limited language skills as a way to bolster other complaints about their priest, such as mistreatment or parochial fees. Because petitions involving language competency often focused primarily on other qualms, these documents are difficult to find. I had initially planned to include a chapter dedicated to indigenous litigation involving language competency, but both documentary and time constraints have unfortunately prohibited this.

I have worked some of these indigenous petitions into various chapters of this project, however. These few legal cases provide only very limited insight into indigenous peoples' influence upon and reactions to Bourbon language policy. Nevertheless, they demonstrate that native parishioners played a role in forging language ideologies and

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[49] Bono López, "La política lingüística" and "Las reformas borbónicas"; Tanck de Estrada, *Pueblos de indios y educación*; and Zahino Peñafort, *Iglesia y sociedad*.
[50] Yanna Yannakakis, *The Art of Being In-Between: Native Intermediaries, Indian Identity, and Local Rule in Colonial Oaxaca* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 169-178.

used these ideologies to their advantage when possible. In some cases, native parishioners tried to sway authorities' deliberations over who would become their new parish priest, sometimes by invoking language laws. Moreover, by complaining about the foundation of the Collegiate Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe at Tepeyac, indigenous communities in the area helped initiate a conflict that would help shape the royal language policy for the institution. These limited insights demonstrate beyond a doubt that indigenous peoples played an important role in both creating and responding to royal and ecclesiastical language policies in the 18th century—a role I hope future research will further illuminate.

This dissertation focuses almost entirely on the Archbishopric of Mexico, in part because it offers a wealth of easily accessed documentation, and in part because it was a large and diverse region. As Taylor notes, "dwelling on the Archdiocese of Mexico's place as the richest colonial diocese in Spanish America obscures great internal differences."[51] The Archbishopric extended from coast to coast, encompassing modern-day northern Veracruz, eastern San Luis Potosí, much of Guerrero, and parts of Guanajuato and Querétaro, in addition to the entire states of Hidalgo, Morelos, State of Mexico, and the Federal District. This vast swath of central Mexico contained both urban and rural areas, including the viceroyalty's most important central hubs (such as the viceregal capital, Mexico City) and many tiny, remote, and heavily indigenous villages. Inhabitants spoke a wide variety of languages, including Spanish, Nahuatl, Otomi,

[51] Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred*, 30.

Mazahua, Tarascan, Tepehua and Huastecan.[52] The archdiocese also included some of the upper clergy's most valued institutions and the lower clergy's least desirable parish posts. This diversity makes the area an ideal focus, as it allows for the examination of language's role within multiple spheres of ecclesiastical administration: regular and secular, central and remote, high clergy and low clergy, and priests of various linguistic capabilities.

My sources include royal and ecclesiastical laws, secular priests' resumes (*resúmenes de méritos*), friars' petitions against secularization, indigenous parishioners' litigation against their parish priests, prelates' pastoral letters (particularly those of Archbishop Lorenzana), records from competitions for benefices, and records of royal and ecclesiastical officials' deliberations over secularization and language policy. Aside from the laws and debates over secularization, most of this documentation pertains specifically to the Archbishopric of Mexico. These documents provide a valuable window into how various royal and ecclesiastical authorities, friars of the mendicant orders and secular priests regarded language reform and the roles of native languages in their own lives, careers, struggles and reform goals. Some of these sources have been used before by other historians, while others have not; but few have ever been examined through the lens of language ideology or policy. I have used these documents to reconstruct the debates, political struggles, language ideologies, reform goals, and social relationships that comprised the archbishopric's language regime under the reign of the Bourbon dynasty. Although these sources are not always (or even often) primarily

[52] *Ibid*., 30.

"about" language, they reveal much about the beliefs churchmen and royal authorities held about indigenous tongues, and the functions these languages performed in these men's lives.

The first two chapters set the stage for the Bourbon Hispanization reforms by exploring some of the language ideologies underpinning these reform efforts. Together, they illustrate that, within the 18th-century Church, indigenous languages were closely associated not only with indigenous peoples, but also with certain kinds of priests. In Chapter One I use a prospography (collective biography) of the secular clergy to explore language ideologies among this class of priests—ideologies which I term "clerical language ideologies." I demonstrate that by the 18th century, native tongues had become emblematic of priests who were relatively poor and had a limited education. Not having to learn a native language in order to become a priest was a privilege that separated the well-brought-up and highly educated clergymen from those who did the lowliest work in the archbishopric's least desirable parishes. In Chapter Two, I examine the role of language ideologies in the mid-18th-century secularization reforms. Reform and authorities' deliberations over this reform, as well as mendicant friars' petitions against it, demonstrate that "mendicant language ideology"—the ideology that linked friars with native languages—entered a state of flux in the wake of secularization. Over time, this instability pushed many mendicants to change the ways they utilized language ideology in interactions with the state.

Chapter Three examines the political and intellectual origins of the language reforms, focusing particularly on the radical Hispanization policy proposed by

Archbishop Lorenzana in the late 1760s and early 1770s. His writings reveal that he saw Hispanization as part of a much broader reform program rooted in Enlightenment ideas about governance, indigenous peoples, education and religion. However, only a handful of other officials shared Lorenzana's militant beliefs, and thus the push to eradicate native languages more or less died out over the course of the 1770s. In Chapter Four I analyze the extent to which proponents of language reform achieved their aims in the Archbishopric of Mexico by analyzing a series of benefice competitions from throughout the reign of the Bourbon dynasty. These competitions illustrate that, although the Hispanization reforms successfully reduced the number of parishes with clerics who spoke the local language, royal and ecclesiastical authorities continued to assign benefices in much the same way as they had as before the reform period. Consequently, contrary to the hopes of Lorenzana and his colleagues, Hispanization failed to ensure that the parish clergy was well educated.

In Chapter Five, I use the Collegiate Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe as a case study of how language reform played out among the upper clergy. From the 1750s onward, and in spite of Hispanization policies, royal law required some of this institution's chapter members to know a native language. Legislation, employment records for the collegiate church, and correspondence between the institution's ecclesiastics and royal authorities reveal virulent debates over this language policy. Most parties involved shared a common goal: increasing the jurisdiction of high-level ecclesiastics over popular worship. Yet they could come to no agreement as to what kind of language policy would facilitate this reorganization of ecclesiastical authority. Royal

officials and monarchs who sought Hispanization in other contexts fought hard to retain and enforce the language requirements for the institution, and native languages were consequently a critical part of the collegiate church until at least the end of the colonial period. Finally, I devote my conclusion to suggesting avenues for future research on language policy in Mexico and reflecting on the "colonial" nature of modern-day linguistic inequality.

Together, these chapters demonstrate that, during the colonial period, central New Spain did not experience a complete "language regime redesign."[53] The language regime certainly entered a state of flux during this period. This occurred due to changing ideologies of governance among royal and ecclesiastical authorities, and also because of mendicants' contributions to debates over secularization. Language ideologies that had once worked in favor of priests who knew native tongues suddenly became less advantageous, especially for the mendicant orders. As a result, the ways that priests (and to some extent, indigenous peoples) utilized language ideologies when interacting with the state changed over the course of the 18th century. The Bourbon Reform era certainly qualifies as a "critical juncture" in LPP and political science nomenclature. In theory, this could have led to language regime redesign. However, in the minds of many royal and ecclesiastical officials, the state tradition of allowing priests to communicate with parishioners in native languages remained relatively strong. With the exception of a few strong-headed proponents of radical Hispanization, most were unsure how a monolingual

[53] For more on language regime redesign, see Cardinal and Sonntag, "State Traditions and Language Regimes," 7.

Spanish Church and state might function, or how to get there. Despite this critical juncture, the colonial Church's Babel effect would persist through Independence.

Mexico's language regime under the reign of the Bourbon dynasty differed dramatically from the regime that exists today. I began this Introduction with a story about Pope Francis, whose advocacy for the use of native languages in religious ritual has been widely perceived (for good reason) as a gesture in support of indigenous rights. However, as I discuss in the Conclusion, language policy has not always been linked so closely with human rights. A number of royal and ecclesiastical authorities exhibited considerable tolerance for the persistence of native languages, and some friars, officials, and even monarchs fought vociferously against policies that would banish these languages from the Church. Yet this tolerance on the part of some officials towards native languages should not be misconstrued as a progressive, pro-indigenous policy. Both pro- and anti-Hispanization factions tended to perceive indigenous peoples as backward, lesser beings who, without the guidance of well-prepared priests, would inevitably fall prey to idolatry and sin. Moreover, those who preferred to maintain the key role of native tongues in ecclesiastical administration were hardly motivated by any ethical imperative to address indigenous rights. The story of language policy in Bourbon New Spain is the story of various individuals within the Church and state bureaucracies striving to do what they thought best for themselves, the Catholic faith, and the viceroyalty. To these men, indigenous peoples' own beliefs about language policy were irrelevant.

## Chapter One: Language Ideologies and the Parish Clergy

In 1737, the Matlazahuatl epidemic raged through the heavily indigenous parish of Xaltocan, just north of Mexico City, killing many of its residents. As the parish's sole cleric, Bernardino Pablo López de Escovedo was responsible for delivering last rites to the ill before they died. Devoted to his job, López de Escovedo spared no effort to ensure he carried out his task. He worked 20-hour days, enduring the stench of corpses and accomplishing near-impossible feats to reach his parishioners. He even crossed a choppy lake in a small canoe, nearly drowning in the process. Although he could not save his parishioner's lives, López de Escovedo did save their souls: according to his account, not a single person died without receiving last rites. Given the importance of López de Escovedo's task, the desperation with which he apparently performed this duty is unsurprising. What is much more remarkable is that this dramatic tale comes not from a novel or historical opus, but from López de Escovedo's 1749 resume.

Although many secular priests' resumes in the 18th century included similar narratives of heroism in the face of adversity, others looked remarkably different. There were no feats of perseverance to be found in Dr. Joseph Francisco Vásquez de Cabrera's 1709 resume. Instead, Vásquez described in great detail his educational accomplishments and the expensive gifts he had lavished upon his parish. In the place of canoes, corpses and horrific epidemics, Vásquez's resume highlighted golden crosses, shiny new altars, renowned scholars, and impressive academic prowess. Significantly, López de Escovedo spoke Nahuatl and Otomi, while Vásquez knew no indigenous languages. In this chapter,

I demonstrate that the stark distinction between the resumes of these two clerics is indicative of a sharp socioeconomic divide between parish priests who were wealthy and well-educated and those who were not. This divide was integral to the language regime in the Archbishopric of Mexico, and thus also to the Bourbon Hispanization reforms of the mid- to late-18th century.

In this chapter, I explore ideologies that linked native languages with parish priests throughout the reign of the Bourbon dynasty by examining the role of language competency in parish priests' careers in the Archbishopric of Mexico. The Bourbon Hispanization laws focused in large part on the secular priests who worked in New Spain's parishes. These decrees ordered parish priests to speak to parishioners in Spanish, blamed these clerics for perpetuating native tongues, and lamented the effects of priests' language competency upon not only native parishioners, but also the state of the clergy. Thus, analyzing the language ideologies linked with the secular priesthood (which I term "clerical language ideologies") is essential for understanding the language policy changes of the 18th century.

The available scholarship reveals much about parish priests' daily lives, careers, and roles in the Bourbon reform process, but very little about the roles of native languages in these men's lives and careers.[1] The few studies addressing this topic have for the most part erroneously assumed that native languages were of little import to the

[1] Studies on priests' careers and roles in the Bourbon Reforms include Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred*; Zahino Peñafort, *Iglesia y sociedad*; and Brading, *Church and State*. While Zahino Peñafort and Taylor do discuss native tongues in relation to the secular clergy, neither delves into this relationship deeply.

secular clergy, since they were supposedly the sole domain of the regular orders.[2] Rodolfo Aguirre has deftly overturned this myth. Yet his excellent work on native languages and the secular clergy is only preliminary; indeed, he points out that the subject requires much more scholarly attention.[3]

I illustrate that not only did native tongues matter to the secular clergy, but the ties between certain secular priests and native languages helped shape language ideologies within the Church—ideologies that would serve as a critical impetus behind the Hispanization reforms. I argue that parish priests' native-language competency was a status marker that reflected a sharp distinction between clerics who had substantial wealth and education and those who did not. Whether a parish priest knew a native language and for what reason said much about his social status, what kind of cleric he was, and what he had to offer the Church and Crown. As a result, indigenous languages had an ambivalent reputation among the parish clergy. Learning a native tongue could be a useful tool, a scholarly accomplishment, a key to one's career, nearly irrelevant, or even a sign of lowliness and limited learning, depending on what sort of priest was learning the language and under what circumstances. While clergymen considered language skills to be substantial assets, they also saw them as emblematic of priests with limited wealth and learning, whom Brading describes as the "clerical proletariat."[4] The freedom of choosing whether to learn an indigenous tongue was a privilege that distinguished the haves from

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[2] See for instance Tanck de Estrada, *Pueblos de indios y educación*, 161; Brading, "Tridentine Catholicism," 8; and D. A. Brading, *The First America: The Spanish Monarchy, Creole Patriots, and the Liberal State, 1492-1867* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 290.
[3] Aguirre Salvador, "La demanda de clérigos," 70 and *Un clero en transición*.
[4] Brading, *Church and State*, 116.

the have-nots, and the highly qualified from those who got by with little more than perseverance.

I begin this chapter by analyzing the structural components of language ideology among the parish clergy. Using royal and ecclesiastical laws and records from benefice competitions, I demonstrate that indigenous languages were deeply integrated into parish priests' careers throughout the colonial period. However, as a result of various ecclesiastical laws, wealthier priests rarely had to know a native tongue; meanwhile, clerics of less wealth and lower status frequently had little choice but to learn one, and generally endured much more difficult work conditions. After this overview, a brief examination of the relationship between language and ethnicity among the parish clergy reveals that the languages parish priests spoke tell us surprisingly little about their ethnicity.

The second half of the chapter is a prospography, or collective biography, of parish priests and the roles of indigenous languages in their careers. Here, I reveal that discourse among the parish clergy both reflected and perpetuated the language ideologies forged by royal and ecclesiastical laws. I do this by exploring the ways that parish priests described themselves and their experiences with native languages in their *resúmenes de méritos* or *relaciones de méritos*—lengthy, descriptive resumes these priests submitted as part of their applications for benefices in the Archbishopric of Mexico (hereafter referred to as "*méritos*"). I analyze the *méritos* of 111 priests from between 1709 and 1807.[5] This

[5] It was not possible to collect a standardized number of *méritos* from regular intervals throughout the Bourbon era. Instead, most of these *méritos* used for this chapter were submitted for benefice competitions that occurred during the following years: 1709, 1749, 1768 and 1798. The substantial length of time

demonstrates that the ways clerics framed their language skills in their *méritos* reflected other aspects of their lives and abilities as clergymen: their wealth, their education, and their dedication to their calling. Priests who had academic achievements and generous donations to brag about normally emphasized these in their *méritos*. If men of this sort knew a native tongue, they were unlikely to highlight it in their resumes, because such a skill was not essential to their careers. On the other hand, priests who were relatively poor and undereducated tended to emphasize their ability to persevere under extreme hardship, and learning or using a native language was often part of that narrative. They were also more likely to highlight hardships that many saw as unique to heavily indigenous parishes, such as high health risks, dangerous roads, difficult terrain and rebellious parishioners. By portraying themselves as hard workers who were willing to endure the hardships of indigenous parishes, rather than as men of learning and good breeding, these priests perpetuated the ideology that linked native languages with the clerical proletariat.

Utilizing *méritos* to examine language ideologies has two methodological advantages. First, we can be fairly certain that these documents reveal priests' own voices. Certainly, clerics themselves may not always have done the physical work of writing their *méritos*: many of these documents are written in the third person (and thus so are many of the quotes I use); sometimes they are printed rather than written by hand; and the occasional notary's signature indicates that public servants might sometimes have

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between these competitions allows for a broad examination of the Bourbon period, and reveals that priests' *méritos* did not change substantially over time, in spite of the Bourbon language reforms.

been involved. However, there is no evidence that notaries or printers would have interfered in the writing process, determined what priests would say about themselves, or how they would say it. Therefore, although the physical authorship is often unknown, I assumed that *méritos* reflect priests' own words, and I describe them as such in what follows.

Second, clerics used their *méritos* both to describe their qualifications and to explain to royal and ecclesiastical authorities why they should receive a benefice. These documents did not exist in a cultural vacuum; rather, the way these clerics described themselves, their qualifications, and the languages they spoke were part of a larger discourse on the qualities the ideal parish priest was supposed to embody. They reveal not only what parish priests thought about themselves, but also—and most especially—what they thought their superiors would want to hear. As a result, these documents are rich, valuable sources for exploring language ideologies within the Catholic Church's bureaucracy.

The *méritos* highlighted here tend to be the most extreme examples of poverty, limited learning, high education or extensive wealth: they are not, strictly speaking, representative of the full corpus of priests' resumes. Most clerics fell somewhere between the extremes of financial security, academic prowess, and linguistic ability portrayed here. I have chosen these examples because they aptly illustrate the vast diversity among parish priests during this period. While none of the *méritos* described in this chapter is representative of all the Archbishopric's parish priests, they depict collectively the deep social and economic divisions within the secular clergy, and the close ties between these

divisions and language ideologies. The substantial differences between the *méritos* of the clerical proletariat and those of more privileged priests show that language ideologies helped both forge and perpetuate socioeconomic distinctions within the secular clergy.

## PRIESTS, BENEFICES AND *VICARIOS*: THE CAREER PATHS OF PARISH CLERGYMEN

Understanding the clerical language ideologies that circulated within the Church requires first examining the career paths of parish priests. Secular priests became ordained in stages, in a process that usually began at a young age. The Council of Trent stipulated that to be eligible for first vows, a boy had to know how to read and write, know the rudiments of the faith, and be confirmed. In order to be promoted to minor orders, he needed to prove that he understood Latin and also had to obtain the recommendations of his pastor and the master of his school. Boys usually reached this stage around age 14, after completing the grammar course for their bachelor's degree. After obtaining minor orders, a priest then sought promotion to the major orders: subdeacon, deacon, and then, finally, presbyter (priest). These levels required lengthy inquiries by the bishop's deputy into applicants' personal backgrounds and moral conduct. While subdeacons and deacons assisted in mass and taught doctrine to children, only presbyters could say mass. However, presbyters required a separate license in order to hear confession, administer baptism or last rites, or perform marriages. Clerics usually

became presbyters in their early-to mid-twenties, normally within a year or two of finishing a bachelor's degree.[6]

Clergymen who did not become rectors, legal advisers, intellectuals, canons or prebendaries normally sought to become parish priests. These fell into multiple categories. In charge of each parish was a *cura beneficiado* (also called a *párroco*). As Taylor states, *curas* "held the parish as a benefice or quasi-feudal property under the title of *vicario in capite* (rector or head priest)." Barring any serious violations of royal or ecclesiastical law, a *cura* held his benefice indefinitely, until he died or received a promotion. Any labor, provisions and parish income that law or custom dedicated to the benefice holder was his. If the parish priest had to leave his post temporarily, a *cura ad interim* or *cura interino*, an interim priest, could take his place in the meantime.[7]

A *cura* could hire *vicarios* to help him administer his parish—and these low-level assistants were plentiful. *Vicarios* were unbeneficed assistants, and thus held no rights to the parish or its income. Instead, parish priests paid these assistants with their own money or with a portion of the salary they earned from the benefice. If they had the money, *curas* often chose to remain in the parish seat and hire multiple *vicarios* to serve the more remote areas of the benefice. In the 18th century, nearly two-thirds of parish priests were *vicarios*. Many were young—in their mid-twenties—and had only recently graduated from the seminary. Some served as *vicarios* as a way to transition between ordination and

[6] Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred*, 93.
[7] *Ibid*., 79.

attaining a benefice. Others remained *vicarios* their entire lives and never became beneficed priests.[8]

Compared to the pastors who became rectors, prebendaries, canons, legal advisers or members of the intelligentsia, parish priests and *vicarios* were often of relatively humble origins. Some of them came from provincial families with prestige but limited wealth, while others had fathers who were shopkeepers, carpenters, military officers, *rancheros* or painters. While clerics in high-level positions often had substantial assets, parish priests often had little income or property, and sometimes had unmarried, widowed, or aged family members to take care of.[9] *Curas'* socioeconomic status varied considerably, but overall, they were not men of enormous prestige or wealth.

The educational attainment of the Archbishopric's parish priests varied significantly. At the very least, clerics needed to be literate, have some familiarity with Latin, and pass public examinations in moral theology. Most also had a bachelor's degree. A select few graduates then went on to attain an advanced degree (a licentiate or a doctorate); only one in seven parish priests had this level of education during the late colonial period. These more educated men generally demonstrated their knowledge to the public (presumably elites) by participating in frequent lectures, disputations, sermons and examinations, and by publishing literary works.[10] As this chapter indicates later on, these public displays of knowledge were significant enough that priests listed and described

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[8] *Ibid*., 80-81. A 1764 royal law ordered that there must be a pastor in residence in any benefice where pueblos were more than four leagues away from the parish seat. In these situations, parish priests were supposed to hire *vicarios* to serve as these additional pastors. In practice, however, the effect of this law upon parish administration was limited. *Ibid.*, 81.
[9] *Ibid*., 87-88.
[10] *Ibid.*, 91.

these accomplishments in their resumes later in life, as indications of their scholarly prowess.

Priests who sought to become *curas* or to switch to a different parish participated in *oposiciones*—competitions for vacant benefices. Once a diocese had accumulated at least four vacancies (usually the result of priests' deaths), the bishop—or, in the Archbishopric of Mexico's case, the archbishop—would announce a new *oposición* for all the available parishes. This generally occurred once every year or two. Priests who wanted one of the vacant benefices would then submit an application and their *méritos*. On the date specified in the call for applicants, all candidates would take oral and written exams in *suficiencia* (proficiency, or suitability; sometimes called *moral*), which tested their theological understanding. The archbishop selected examiners to administer the oral exams; these weighed not only applicants' theological prowess, but also their moral integrity, prudence and dedication to the faith.[11] Each examiner gave applicants a *suficiencia* grade of "first," "second," or "third," or sometimes a half-grade in between, and the candidate's ultimate grade would be put to a vote. Candidates who knew a native tongue also took a language exam, administered by experts in the language.

Multiple individuals were involved in selecting which priests received which benefice in an *oposición*, including the examiners, the archbishop and the viceroy. But the prelate's opinion was the one that mattered most. Based on their judgments of applicants' *méritos* and exam grades, the examiners would vote on their preferred candidates to fill the vacancy, and then present a list to the archbishop of the clerics they

[11] *Ibid*., 99-100.

deemed fit, indicating which ones they had voted for first, second and third place for each vacancy. From this list, the archbishop selected a *terna*—his top three preferred candidates for each vacancy. He then sent this list of recommendations to the Church's vice-patron—who, in the case of the Archbishopric of Mexico, was the viceroy.[12] In theory, the viceroy had the power to choose any of the archbishop's top three candidates, or even request a new selection. In practice, however, he almost always chose the archbishop's first-place recommendation, in order to avoid inciting the prelate's resentment or public gossip.[13] As a result, personal connections and friendships with the archbishop could be critical to a *cura*'s career. However, those who had direct ties to the prelate often had difficulty maintaining them once they began their parish work, due in part to distance and regulations that restricted their travel. This made participation in *oposiciones* essential, because it was one of parish priests' few avenues for forging or maintain ties with the archbishop.[14] The records for these *oposiciones*—including not only *méritos,* but also lists of available benefices, competition results, and exam grades—comprise much of the source material for this chapter. These documents reveal that native languages were critical to the careers of many parish priests—but only the lowly, uneducated men of the clerical proletariat.

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[12] *Ibid*., 99-100.
[13] *Ibid*., 99-100. In 1755, Viceroy Revillagigedo the Elder advised his successor that, although he could choose who won the parish, it was best to pick the archbishop's first choice: "experience indicates that doing otherwise stirs up resentments by the prelates, public gossip, and other troubles that can disturb the peace and harmony that are so necessary in the weighty enterprise of secular and ecclesiastical affairs." *Ibid*., 100.
[14] *Ibid*., 101.

## NATIVE LANGUAGES AND PARISH PRIESTS' CAREER PATHS

The Mexican Church dictated that most of the Archbishopric's *curas* should know an indigenous language, because the vast majority of the region's parishioners did not speak Spanish. Every benefice in the Archbishopric had a language designation assigned by the Church. This indicated which language (or languages) a cleric had to know in order to communicate with his parishioners. Parishes that required a minister who knew a native tongue were called *lengua* benefices. Throughout the late colonial period, the vast majority of the Archbishopric's parishes were designated as *lengua*. Most of these were Nahuatl-speaking parishes. Luisa Zahino Peñafort's index of parishes in the Archbishopric in 1766 shows that, of 165 benefices run by secular priests, 154 were *lengua*. Of these, 94 were listed as Nahuatl parishes, 33 as Otomi, 4 as Mazahua, and 2 as Huastecan. The remaining 21 *lengua* benefices were each home to speakers of more than one language. In addition, there were 28 parishes under the care of the regular orders; of these, 22 were *lengua* (17 Nahuatl, and 5 Otomi).[15]

The Bourbon Hispanization reforms do not appear to have altered these *lengua* designations. Even after 1770, *lengua* parishes continued to dominate the Archbishopric. A register from the 1770s and 1780s lists 227 parishes in the Archbishopric, only twelve of which were Spanish-only; all twelve were within the immediate vicinity of Mexico

[15] Zahino Peñafort, *Iglesia y sociedad*, 63-72. It is possible that these designations did not always accurately reflect the languages parishioners actually spoke. In its 1753 petition against secularization, which I discuss in the following chapter, the Mexico City Ayuntamiento suggested that the Church sometimes mislabeled Otomi-speaking parishes as Nahuatl or Spanish, simply because authorities had trouble finding enough priests who knew the difficult Otomi language. BN, AF Caja 127, exp. 1646, f. 10r.

City.[16] Throughout the Bourbon period, then, upwards of 90% of the archbishopric's parishes legally had to have a cleric who spoke the local native language.

From the 16th century-on, both royal and ecclesiastical laws required *curas* themselves—rather than *vicarios* or interpreters under their service—to know the language of their benefices. This was the case from 1563, when the Council of Trent decreed that parish priests should explain the sacraments in the vernacular language if necessary.[17] The Third Provincial Mexican Council, celebrated in 1585, issued similar orders. It mandated that, while Spaniards, black slaves, *mulatos* and *chichimecas* should learn Christian doctrine in Spanish, parish priests were to teach natives in their own languages.[18] Royal law soon followed suit: in 1583, a royal decree from King Philip II ordered that all priests—be they friars or *curas*—could only serve in indigenous benefices if they knew the appropriate indigenous tongues. In 1619, a decree from Philip III ordered viceroys and *audiencias* to remove from their benefices any *curas* who did not

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[16] AHAM, Caja 107CL, Libro 3. Spanish-speaking *Cura*tos included San Miguel, Santa Veracruz, Santa Catarina Mártir, San Josef, Santa Cruz, San Sebastian, San Pablo, Santa María la Redonda, Santa Cruz Acatlán, Santa Ana, Salto del Agua, and Santo Tomás. An additional seven benefices included no indication as to whether or not they were *lengua*. The remaining 208 parishes were definitely home to residents who spoke an indigenous language.

[17] "Session the Twenty-Fourth," Decree on Reformation, Chapter VII, in *The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Oecumenical Council of Trent*, ed and trans. J. Waterworth (London: Dolman, 1848) <http://history.hanover.edu/texts/trent/ct24.html> (accessed November 1, 2008).

[18] *Concilio III Provincial Mexicano, celebrado en México el año 1585* (México: M. Miro & D. Barsa, 1859), Libro I, Título I, "De la doctrina que se ha de enseñar a los rudos," I and III. Council decrees referred to hereafter as "Concilio III." The Third Provincial Mexican Council also decreed that parish priests should promote the erection of schools in which indigenous peoples could learn Spanish, because this would aid their Christian education. Although the Third Council held that the Spanish language and comprehension of Christian doctrine were highly complementary, it did not deem Spanish to be essential to proper indoctrination. Rather, most of its decrees—as well as those of Council of Trent—suggested that priests could most effectively explain the tenets of Christianity to indigenous peoples using their own languages.

know the languages of their parishioners.[19] A common legal reference, Juan de Solórzano Pereira's 1647 *Política Indiana*, offered a conflicting rule, however: according to Solórzano, one coadjutor was required for each native language spoken in the parish.[20] While this one legal text suggested that it was *vicarios*' duty to know the local languages, all other 16th- and 17th-century laws delegated this responsibility specifically to *curas*.

Up until 1769, royal and ecclesiastical authorities continued to oblige parish priests to be fluent in the languages of their parishioners. The royal orders and the decrees from the Council of Trent and the Third Mexican Provincial Council in the 16th century that required *curas* to know native languages remained in effect until 1770. Royal authorities occasionally issued orders reinforcing this language competency rule. For instance, in response to a 1749 petition from the indigenous peoples of San Martín Zapotlán in the diocese of Puebla, Ferdinand VI and the Council of the Indies ordered that beneficed priests had to know the local languages rather than rely on interpreters to communicate with parishioners.[21] Later on, in 1755, Viceroy Revillagigedo the Elder reminded his successor that parish priests must know the languages of their flocks.[22] Even the 1754 law ordering indigenous peoples to learn Spanish still required *curas* to

[19] *Recopilación de Leyes de los Reynos de las Indias* (Madrid: Consejo de la Hispanidad, 1943), Vol. I, Book I, Title VI, Law xxx, 45 and Title XIII, Law ix.
[20] Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred*, 82.
[21] AGN, RCO, Vol. 69, exp. 5.
[22] Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred*, 573 n. 125.

know the local language and threatened removal from their parishes if they did not comply, citing the royal laws issued on this matter in 1583 and 1619.[23]

In spite of the language requirements for *curas*, these men sometimes left it up to their *vicarios* to communicate with parishioners who did not know Spanish—a practice that was supported by royal and ecclesiastical law starting in the early 1770s. As Chapter Four will demonstrate, throughout the Bourbon period, archbishops and viceroys sometimes gave *lengua* benefices to priests who did not know the designated language of the parish, assuming that a *vicario* would serve as an interpreter. Archbishop Lorenzana complained of this practice in his 1769 Fifth Pastoral Letter, arguing that *vicarios* were too poorly educated to know how to explain the complexities of Christian doctrine even in Spanish, let alone in a variety of indigenous tongues.[24]

King Charles III was apparently more trusting of *vicarios* to take on the task of translation: his 1770 decree ordering the elimination of indigenous tongues stated that bishops should select parish priests for benefices based on merit, regardless of their language skills. If beneficed priests could not communicate with their parishioners, they could hire *vicarios* who knew the local language.[25] The 1771 Fourth Provincial Mexican Council issued the same order.[26] The Bourbon language reform laws did not seek to oust

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[23] Richard Konetzke, *Colección de Documentos para la Historia de la Formación Social de Hispanoamérica, 1493-1810* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1953), 3:1, n. 166 (1754).

[24] Archbishop Francisco Antonio de Lorenzana y Butrón, "Carta Pastoral V: Para que los Indios aprendan el Castellano." (1769)

[25] AGN, RCO, Vol. 96, exp. 102.

[26] Paulino Castañeda Delgado and Pilar Hernández Aparicio, *El IV "Concilio" Mexicano* (Madrid: Editorial Deimos, 2001), Book I, Title I, "De la doctrina que se ha de enseñar a los rudos," IV. Council decrees referred to hereafter as "Concilio IV." See also Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred*, 96.

native tongues entirely from parish service; rather, they delegated the task of knowing the local language to *vicarios* rather than *curas*, and only in cases where parishioners did not already know Spanish.[27] Parishes' *lengua* designations remained in place, but now archbishops and viceroys had no legal obligation to fill these benefices with *curas* who knew the language; instead, it was the *cura*'s obligation to ensure that he hired *vicarios* to translate if necessary.

Although *curas*' language requirements changed substantially over time, native tongues were deeply integrated into the process of ordination throughout the colonial period. To become ordained, most would-be priests required some form of personal income, which would allow them to live "with decency" and provide for their basic needs regardless of how much they earned from their parish assignments. Normally, a priest would achieve ordination either to a title (by means) of sufficient personal wealth (*a título de suficiencia*) or to a title of an endowed chaplaincy (*a título de capellanía*).[28] It was also possible to become ordained by becoming appointed as a *vicario* (*a título de administración*), although this path to ordination was probably not common, and it is unclear when it first became available.[29] However, thanks to the 1585 Third Provincial Mexican Council, clerics also had a fourth option: ordination *a título de idioma*—by right

[27] Charles III and the Fourth Provincial Mexican Council may have delegated the task of translation to vicarios in part because, by the mid-1760s, royal authorities were seeking to appoint more vicarios to cater to a growing population. Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred*, 81.

[28] John F. Schwaller, "The Expansion of Nahuatl as a Lingua Franca among Priests in Sixteenth-Century Mexico," *Ethnohistory* 59:4 (2012): 678.

[29] Archbishop Lorenzana described this form of ordination in his fifth Pastoral Letter in 1769, and encouraged it over ordination *a título de idioma*. However, ordination *a título de administración* appears rarely in the benefice and ordination records that provide the source material for this chapter and the following one. Lorenzana, Carta Pastoral V.

of his competency in an indigenous language. Citing a dire need for priests who could speak native languages, the Council ordered that men who knew one of these tongues could forgo the usual financial requirements for ordination.[30] The option of ordination *a título de idioma* thus offered a path to priesthood for men of limited wealth, for whom a career in the clergy would have been otherwise unattainable.[31]

It was also possible, albeit less common, for men to become ordained *a título de idioma* without passing a language exam. Priests who did not speak a native tongue could pass ordination by simply promising to learn a native tongue or to improve upon their limited linguistic knowledge. Yet, this form of ordination did not relieve priests of the burden of learning a new language. Because *título de idioma* clergymen had to take a language exam to be promoted to the next level of the priesthood, those who pledged to learn a language or improve their skills had to follow through on those promises if they hoped to advance their careers. They did not always succeed. Mariano Antonio Rodríguez, for instance, requested to be relieved of his *título de idioma* status in 1801 because he had failed to fulfill his promise to learn Nahuatl. He explained that he had an ill, elderly and widowed mother and a single sister to take of; consequently, he had been unable to settle in a Nahuatl-speaking parish where he could learn the language well enough to be promoted to a full priest. Thankfully for Rodríguez, the chapter at Mexico City's cathedral granted him his wish, and thus he no longer had to learn Nahuatl.[32]

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[30] *Concilio III,* Libro I, Titulo IV, "Del Titulo de Beneficio ó Patrimonio," I. "Ningun clérigo secular sea admitido á los órdenes, si no tiene beneficio."

[31] Aguirre, *Un clero en transición*, 210-212 and Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred*, 94-95.

[32] AGN, BN 550, exp. 34. For examples of priests ordained *a título de idioma* before learning a native language, see AGN, BN 41, exp. 5; BN, 550, exp. 35; AGN, BN 803, exp. 2 (see the applications of José de

Ordination *a título de idioma* became increasingly common in the Archbishopric of Mexico over the course of the colonial period. Few priests were ordained this way in the 16th century, as most priests who spoke a native tongue had sufficient wealth to become ordained by other means.[33] By the 18th century, however, this form of ordination had become common, at least in the Archbishopric of Mexico. José Pérez de Lanciego y Eguiluz y Mirafuentes, who served as archbishop from 1714 until 1728, ordained significantly more men *a título de idioma* than did his predecessor for reasons that are not entirely clear.[34] The trend Lanciego began in the early 18th century would continue for decades afterwards: in a list of 93 candidates for promotion in the archbishopric in the early 1760s, over half had been ordained *a título de idioma*.[35] In spite of reformers' frequent calls to limit or eliminate ordination *a título de idioma* after the mid-18th century (discussed in the following chapter), this practice continued unabated through to the end of the colonial period.[36]

Although common, ordination *a título de idioma* was widely considered the least desirable method of becoming a priest: it may have offered poor men a means to a career, but it brought little economic stability. Priests ordained *a título de idioma* normally earned little to no salary during their first year or two or parish work. This appears to have been part of the *título de idioma* contract: these priests seem to have owed the

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Palma y Mesa, Manuel de la Torre, José Nuñez, Cayetano Antonio de Herrera, Felix de Villanueva, Gerónimo de Velasco, and others).

[33] Schwaller, "The Expansion of Nahuatl," 678-679 & 686-687.

[34] Aguirre Salvador, *Un clero en transición*, 79-82.

[35] Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred*, 95. This was not the case throughout New Spain: Taylor notes that only eight of the 85 priests up for promotion in the diocese of Guadalajara in 1757 and 1770 had been ordained *a título de idioma*.

[36] See Chapter Four of this dissertation and Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred*, 96.

archbishop a certain term of parish service in exchange for receiving ordination without economic backing. There is no mention of unpaid labor in the ecclesiastical edicts regarding *título de idioma* ordination; by law, there do not appear to have been any particular requirements related to these priests' salaries or their parish work. Nevertheless, Bourbon-era priests complained frequently in their *méritos* that, after being ordained by right of their language skills, they had owed the archbishop a period of parish service with limited pay—or, very occasionally, no pay at all.[37] It is possible that this practice gradually became common over the course of the colonial period; it may also be the case that only priests who had yet to learn a native tongue well had to work with a limited salary while they learned the language of their parishioners. *Título de idioma* ordination may have functioned as a sort of indentured servitude: the archbishop treated poor would-be priests with charity and mercy by ordaining them despite their lack of economic support, and in return, these men owed him a period of parish labor with little pay. It is unclear under precisely what circumstances *título de idioma* priests received little to no salary for their work—or how they supported themselves under such conditions—but *méritos* indicate that this phenomenon was far from rare.

Whether paid or not, priests ordained *a título de idioma*—unlike those ordained by *capellanía* or by their own personal wealth—were required to work in a parish after ordination. This work was often more difficult and less comfortable than clerics had hoped. As a result, priests sometimes petitioned the archbishop in hopes of being relieved

[37] Some examples of priests who claimed that they had worked for no pay at all: Andrés Bernal de Salvatierra, discussed below, and José Buenaventura de Estrada in AGN, BN 199, exp. 12.

of their *título de idioma* duties. For instance, Joaquin Antonio Gutiérrez asked in 1801 for release from his obligations because he had epilepsy. Having recently obtained funding by way of an endowed chaplaincy, Gutiérrez asked to be promoted to presbyter a *título de capellanía* (by right of endowed chaplaincy) rather than on the strength of his language skills. He noted that, because he was ordained by right of the Otomi language, he was "obliged to administer [a parish]" once promoted to presbyter. The archbishop's fiscal agreed with Gutiérrez, stating that, given his illness, he would not be able to complete "the administration jobs to which *ministros de idioma* are posted."[38] Another such petition by Antonio Martínez Infante in 1812 noted the "custom and practice" (but not law, perhaps) of "ascribing only to parish service those who are ordained *a título de idioma*."[39] In other words, priests ordained by *capellanía* could find other jobs aside from parish administration, while *título de idioma* priests could not. Once ordained to presbyter, clerics ordained on the strength of their language skills had little choice but to accept a parish appointment. They appear to have owed this in return for their ordination.

In spite of the hard work and low pay that ordination *a título de idioma* engendered, for some it led to a comfortable and successful career—eventually. For instance, after becoming ordained by right of his Nahuatl skills and working as a *vicario* and a *cura* in numerous parishes, Cristóbal Gómez Peralta would go on to become a

[38] AGN, BN 550, exp. 37.

[39] AGN, BN 972, exp. 1. For other examples of priests who asked to be relieved of their *título de idioma* duties due to illness, see AGN, BN 550, exp. 36 (Juan Ignacio Herrera); BN 423, exp. 12 (Bernardino Islas); BN 424, exp. 72 (Rafael Martínez de Oropeza); BN 1058, exp. 16 (Manuel Fernando Bravo y Barrio); and various records in BN 972, exp. 1.

canon at the Colegiata de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe in 1811.[40] Frequently, however, priests ordained this way remained in the archbishopric's least desirable parishes, administering the areas that were considered beneath their wealthier and more educated colleagues who had been lucky enough to achieve ordination by other means. Consequently, while *título de idioma* offered a useful means to a career for men of limited means, this form of ordination was a highly undesirable last resort. Many men went this route, but those who could avoid it did so. As a result, ordination *a título de idioma* forged a sharp distinction between priests with means and those without—between those who could avoid it and those who could not. The manner in which a priest was ordained indicated his wealth and status. Ususally, this also committed him to that same level of wealth and status permanently by dictating a difficult and unprofitable career path.

## LANGUAGE AND ETHNICITY

The fact that many parish priests were legally required to know a native language raises the question of how many of these priests themselves were indigenous and were native speakers of an indigenous language. Since the 16th century, men categorized as *indios* were legally allowed to become ordained as priests in New Spain. However, few actually did so in practice, and throughout the colonial period, many clergymen questioned indigenous peoples' capacity to serve as priests. For instance, the 1585

[40] AGI, Mexico 2560, f. 1104; AGI, Mexico 2561; AGN, BN 338, exp. 12; and AGN, BN 363, exp. 4.

decrees of the Third Provincial Council stated that "neither those of mixed blood, whether from Indians or Moors, nor mulattoes in the first degree are to be admitted to orders without great caution." Stafford Poole points out that Mexican bishops had come up with the line banning *indios*, *mestizos* and *mulatos* from ordination, but it was authorities in Rome who added the phrase "without great caution," thereby creating a legal loophole that technically allowed these individuals to become priests.[41] Left to their own devices, it appears, Mexico's bishops would have preferred that indigenous peoples be barred from the clergy altogether.

This question of whether indigenous men could make capable priests remained controversial well into the 18th century. When a native priest named Don Julián Cirilo de Castilla Aquihuatcatehutle petitioned the Crown in 1753 to create a seminary for indigenous boys in the Villa de Guadalupe, just north of Mexico City, Archbishop Rubio y Salinas and the city council of Mexico City both disapproved of the measure. The Crown officially supported the project, but never provided an endowment so that the seminary could actually open.[42] An in-depth analysis of support for or against indigenous clergymen is beyond the scope of this dissertation. However, the response to Castilla Aquihuatcatehutle's petition suggests that although indigenous peoples could legally become ordained, few authorities supported the idea in practice.

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[41] Stafford Poole, "Church Law on the Ordination of Indians and Castas in New Spain," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 61 (1981): 639-644 and Kelly S. McDonough, "Indigenous Intellectuals in Early Colonial Mexico: The Case of Antonio del Rincón, Nahua Grammarian and Priest," *Colonial Latin American Review* 20:2 (2011): 150.

[42] O'Hara, *A Flock Divided*, 72-79. Curiously, although this attempt to found a native seminary failed, a number of convents for indigenous nuns opened successfully in New Spain in the 18th century. O'Hara argues that convents for indigenous women were more palatable because religious authorities believed that Indianness was inherently feminine. See *A Flock Divided*, 80-88.

Indeed, only a handful of the Archbishopric's parish priests identified themselves as *indios*. Most priests noted their parents' ancestry in their *méritos*, and some specified in their *méritos* or benefice applications whether they were *indios* or *españoles*. In only a select few of the applications I examined did the candidate self-describe as an *indio*. William Taylor's work confirms that indigenous priests were relatively rare: he estimates that only about 5% of the Archbishopric's parish priests identified themselves as *indios*. The vast majority of parish priests appear to have been creole; most said that they were of Spanish descent, but only about 3% were *peninsulares*. Most had grown up in the Archbishopric, and about one-third were from Mexico City.[43]

Although plenty of parish priests said that they were *indios* or *españoles*, labelling these men as "indigenous" or "not indigenous" is a tricky endeavor, since such categorizations were relatively fluid. By the 18th century, New Spain's *sistema de castas* (caste system) had provided a supposedly rigid system of social differentiation and categorization that was based primarily on lineage. However, the *sistema* was complex, as it was shaped by a combination of contemporary ideas about blood purity, religious purity, legal-theological status, and reproduction. The caste system was even more unstable in practice than in theory: as María Elena Martínez puts it, "although the use of *casta* categories in official records tended to follow certain genealogical rules in that they were supposed to be determined according to proportions of Spanish, native, and African ancestries, in practice the uses of the classifications tended to be anything but

[43] Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred*, 87-88.

systematic."[44] Indeed, Magali Carrera describes the "supposedly rigid boundaries" of the *casta* system as "arbitrary and vacillating, vulnerable to rupture and breach at every turn."[45] Moreover, the *sistema de castas* became increasingly unstable as the 18th century wore on, as the traditional discourse of blood purity and ancestry began to intermingle with contemporary concepts related to social status, such as diligence, education, and utility to the public good.[46] The result was a system of categorization that did not accurately portray individuals' lived experiences or identities.[47] Thus, although parish priests and candidates for benefices frequently specified that they or their parents were *indios* or *españoles*, we cannot be completely sure how they actually identified.

The languages these priests indicated as their mother tongues complicate the matter of their ethnic identities even further. Of the 338 applicants for benefices for whom some information is available (from *méritos*, benefice applications, or descriptions in *ternas*), 17 reported that they were native speakers of an indigenous language.[48] Only

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[44] María Elena Martínez, "The Language, Genealogy, and Classification of "Race" in Colonial Mexico," in *Race and Classification: The Case of Mexican America*, eds. Ilona Katzew and Susan Deans-Smith (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 35.

[45] Magali M. Carrera, *Imagining Identity in New Spain: Race, Lineage, and the Colonial Body in Portraiture and Casta Paintings* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), 152.

[46] Martínez, "The Language, Genealogy, and Classification of "Race"," 37.

[47] For more on the fluidity of racial/ethnic categories during the colonial period, see Twinam, *Purchasing Whiteness*; Andrew B. Fisher and Matthew D. O'Hara, eds., *Imperial Subjects: Race and Identity in Colonial Latin America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009); and Joanne Rappaport, *The Disappearing Mestizo: Configuring Difference in the Colonial New Kingdom* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014).

[48] These native-speaking priests were Juan de Dios Negrete, 1709-10 (AGN, BN 338, exp. 2); Miguel Thadeo de los Ángeles, 1739 (BN 603, exp. 12); Francisco Pérez, 1739 (BN 603, exp. 12); Mathias Viveros, 1739 (BN 603, exp. 12); Francisco Miguel de Ortega, 1749 (BN 199, exp. 12); Onofre Gil Barragán, 1749 (BN 199, exp. 12); Juan Manuel de Cea, 1749 (BN 199, exp. 12); Manuel Ignacio Ramírez, 1749 (BN 199, exp. 12); Pedro Mathias de Castrejón, 1749 (BN 199, exp. 12); Antonio de Texeira, 1749 (BN 199, exp. 12); Antonio Joseph Barela, 1749 (BN 199, exp. 12); Cayetano Ignacio Sánchez, 1768 (BN 603, exp. 5); Gregorio Agustín Villavicencio, 1768 (BN 603, exp. 5); Manuel Vallinas Villeda, 1768 (BN 603, exp. 5); Joseph Ildefonso de la Herrán, 1768 (BN 603, exp. 5); Ignacio Ramón Moreno, 1768 (BN 603, exp. 5); and Bernardo Sánchez Hurtado, 1799 (BN 199, exp. 12). Interestingly, most of these priests

one of these 17 native speakers said he was an *indio*. The classification of eight of these native speakers is unknown, and—surprisingly—the remaining eight said either that they or their parents were *españoles*, which means they must have been able to pass as creoles. Most appear to have grown up in relatively small towns in heavily indigenous areas, mostly located north or northeast of Mexico City in what are now Hidalgo and the State of Mexico. Some, like Ignacio Ramón Moreno, noted that they had forgotten their supposedly "native" language as they got older, and so had had to relearn it prior to ordination.[49] Others appear to have known their native tongues extremely well; Bernardo Sánchez Hurtado, for instance, described himself as an *español*, but spoke Otomi fluently, and said he was a native speaker.[50] Clerics like Sánchez and Ramón might have grown up speaking Spanish but also learning Nahuatl or Otomi from servants, housekeepers, lovers or business owners.[51] Thus, they did not necessarily need to be *indios* to identify an indigenous language as their mother tongue.

Meanwhile, some priests reported that they were *indios* but not native speakers of an indigenous language. For example, Juan Faustino Juárez de Escovedo, who applied for a benefice in 1749, referred to himself in his *méritos* as *indio principal* (principal Indian) and *cacique* (indigenous lord) of Chilpancingo (located in what is now Guerrero), but

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participated in the 1749 and 1768 competitions. It is unclear why such a high number of native speakers would have sought benefices in those years in particular; however, the high number of *lengua* benefices available in 1749 may have been a factor.

[49] Ignacio Ramón Moreno, AGN, BN 603, exp. 5 (1768).

[50] Bernardo Sánchez Hurtado, AGN, BN 577, exp. 1 (1799) and BN 1153, exp. 1.

[51] It was especially common for Spaniards to learn Nahuatl, since from the 16th century this often served as a lingua franca among varying ethnic groups. Martin Nesvig, "Spanish Men, Indigenous Language, and Informal Interpreters in Postcontact Mexico" *Ethnohistory* 59 (2012): 739-764.

said that he had learned Nahuatl at the Royal University in Mexico City.[52] Being a native speaker of an indigenous language does not appear to have been an indicator of indigenous identity or lineage, nor did all *indios* speak an indigenous tongue as their first language. Priests' méritos indicate that the relationship between mother tongues and the *sistema de castas* among the archbishopric's parish clergy was just as complex and contradictory as the *sistema* itself.

## MÉRITOS

In many ways, the *méritos* parish priests submitted as part of their benefice applications were highly formulaic. Most began by stating the parish in which the cleric currently worked, his parentage, and whether he was of legitimate and/or noble birth. This was usually followed by a detailed description of his educational accomplishments, starting from his grammatical studies as a child. These descriptions might state the age at which he began his studies, what subjects he studied and where, how well he did in his classes, and the academic exercises (such as exams, theses and public defenses) in which he participated. Next came the priest's parish experience, which explained where he had worked and under what status (as *vicario*, *teniente* or parish priest), as well as his accomplishments in that benefice—this might include parishioners' spiritual progress or items he bought for the parish church. Many priests ended their méritos with a plea for the archbishop to consider their application, which usually humbled the applicant,

[52] Juan Faustino Juárez de Escovedo, AGN, BN 199, exp. 12 (1749).

describing his qualifications as limited: many included the phrase "*estos son mis cortos méritos*" (these are my meager merits).

Given the rote nature of these documents, the frequent variations between different priests' *méritos* are striking. Nowhere does the distinction between priests who had to learn a native tongue and those who did not appear more vivid than in these men's resumes. Clerics who had impressive academic achievements and enough money to lavish gifts upon their parishioners tended to highlight these attributes in their *méritos*. Knowing a native tongue could prove useful for these sorts of clergymen, but it was not critical to their careers. By contrast, priests of limited education and wealth—and especially those who had no choice but to become ordained *a título de idioma*—were much more likely to emphasize the suffering they had endured during their parish work, and their dedication in the face of this hardship. Priests' *méritos* reveal that knowledge of a native tongue could indicate poverty, limited learning, utility to Church and Crown, scholarly prowess, or extensive dedication, depending on the attributes of the priest in question. Whether and why a *cura* learned a native tongue indicated what sort of priest he was: a theological master who worked in the most comfortable parishes, a poor man with limited learning who endured difficult work conditions, or somewhere in between.

## GOOD BREEDING, DOCTORATES AND GOLDEN CROSSES: THE WEALTHY AND WELL-EDUCATED

Dr. Joseph Francisco Vásquez de Cabrera, whose *méritos* described briefly at the beginning of this chapter, was the sort of priest who had no need to learn a native

language. Dr. Vásquez submitted an application to a benefice competition in the archbishopric in 1709. Like other applicants, he stated that he was of legitimate birth and came from a noble family that was "clean" of what Spaniards would have seen as genetic "defects," such as Jewish ancestry. However, while his peers would either state their origins as fact or note that they could provide proof, Dr. Vásquez instead brushed off the question of evidence, noting that "it is very easy to prove it, if necessary." Although did not mention his family's socioeconomic status, his feigned indifference toward his family origins made clear that he grew up wealthy. Vásquez devoted the rest of his *méritos* almost entirely to his educational achievements, which he described in a similarly boastful manner. He wrote that he had not bothered to list his accomplishments at the Colegio Máximo de San Pedro y San Pablo, "being always the first *Decurion* and *Opositor*, and also obtaining first place in all his classes…" Nevertheless, he painstakingly listed every examination, thesis defense, and public debate that he had completed during the course of his bachelor and graduate education.[53]

After finishing his doctorate, Vásquez had worked as a professor at the Royal University in Mexico City, and preached and conducted confessions on the side. To show that he was well-connected in the archbishopric's academic community, he name dropped numerous important people he had associated with along the way, such as the professor who had granted him his bachelor degree and the students he had examined for their own degrees. He then began parish work for the first time in 1707, when the archbishop

[53] "…siendo siempre el primer Decurion y opositor, obteniendo tambien el primer lugar en todas las clases…" Joseph Francisco Vásquez de Cabrera, AGN, BN 338, exp. 2 (1709-10). The Real Academia Española's dictionary provides the following definition of a Decurion: "In grammatical studies, a student who, for being skilled, is charged with giving lessons to up to ten other people."

appointed him interim *cura* of Ocoyoacac (located in the modern-day State of Mexico). He wasted no more space than a mere half sentence describing his service during the two and a half years in Ocoyoacac, stating that he served "with notorious vigilance and care, teaching his parishioners doctrine…" and then devoted half a page to the material improvements he had made for the parish. He had built a new chapel, adorned the altar, and added a "very expensive" sculpted silver and gold cross, among other things—all signs that he had enough money not only to support himself, but also to lavish gifts upon his parish.[54]

Dr. Vásquez's *méritos* must have impressed the archbishop, the viceroy and the competition's examiners, for they granted him the parish of Taxco, one of the most desirable benefices in the archbishopric, located in modern-day northern Guerrero. Although its southwestern climate was harsh and hot, it provided a generous salary. Vásquez had very little parish experience nor did he speak Nahuatl, which was the designated language of the parish (along with Spanish). This was apparently of little concern to the men who assigned benefices. Unfortunately for Vásquez, he had to renounce his new benefice for health reasons.[55] Given his personal wealth, however, he was likely able to recover in relative comfort, without worrying about supporting himself. Despite his illness, he lived a life of relative privilege—his good breeding and economic stability had allowed him to become a respectable theologian and an excellent candidate for one of the archbishopric's best parishes. He never learned the language of his

[54] Joseph Francisco Vásquez de Cabrera, AGN, BN 338, exp. 2 (1709-10).
[55] *Ibid*.

parishioners because he never had to: his wealth enabled his ordination and would also have allowed him to hire a *vicario* to do the translating for him.

Although priests of Vásquez's wealth and stature did not need to learn a native tongue in order to attain ordination, some had to in order to please their parishioners. Manuel Mendrice, who applied for a benefice in 1709, serves as an example. Although not as haughty and impressive as Vásquez, Mendrice was well connected, and he appears to have lived a life of relative privilege. His father had previously been the *contador mayor* (chief accountant) for New Spain's *Audiencia* (High Court), and before that had served on the *Consejo de Guerra* (War Council) of the Andes region. Having grown up in the Andes, Mendrice arrived in New Spain with his parents at age nine. His parents "wished him to have the most beneficial education and upbringing," so they sent him to live and study with the family of Manuel Fernández de Santa Cruz, Bishop of Puebla. After earning his Bachelor's degree, Mendrice's educational accomplishments garnered him a six-year scholarship. He received the best grade in his sacred theology class while studying for his licentiate degree, and later received a doctorate in the same subject.[56]

Mendrice's *méritos* indicate that he learned Nahuatl for the sake of his parishioners' spiritual wellbeing. After applying for some illustrious canonry positions, Mendrice received the benefice of Xaltocan—a parish just north of Mexico City with frequent conflicts between clerics and parishioners, and whose appeal to priests was low enough that *vicarios* rarely stayed very long.[57] Mendrice, however, remained there for 12

[56] Manuel Mendrice, AGN, BN 338, exp. 2 (1709-10).
[57] Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred*, 107-111 and 118.

years. While there, he put his family's wealth to use, donating ornaments for the church and building a house for priests to live in. He noted in his *méritos* that he spent his time there learning Nahuatl, "to better ease his conscience." Mendrice was so committed to his parishioners that he learned a new language to ensure smooth communication with them and, thus, their salvation—or so his *méritos* would have us believe.

In contrast to the story he told in his resume, a petition against Mendrice suggests that pressure from his parishioners may have played a role in his decision to learn Nahuatl. In 1710 or 1711, Don Juan Francisco, the *gobernador* of the town of San Miguel Xaltocan, drew up a letter for the local indigenous peoples. They complained that Mendrice, their parish priest, did not speak Nahuatl; they found this problematic, since none of them could speak or understand Spanish. The people of Xaltocan lamented that their inability to communicate with their cleric had caused them "very serious distress and disadvantage," especially since it had made confession entirely impossible. "In danger," they warned, "is no less than the salvation of so many souls..." Since Mendrice had just been promoted to a different benefice, they asked the viceroy to push the *cabildo* (chapter) of Mexico City's cathedral to ensure that their next *cura* could speak Nahuatl. A *lengua* priest's guidance would grant the people of Xaltocan "clarity of doctrine, the enlightenment of his teaching, and the wellbeing of our souls."[58] Granting them their wish, in 1711 the Viceroy Duke of Linares forwarded the petition to the *cabildo* and asked them to take it into consideration when assigning benefices that year. Unfortunately for the indigenous Catholics of Xaltocan, the examiners gave their

[58] AGN, BN 236, exp. 24 (1711).

benefice to Dr. Joseph Caravallido y Cabueñas—yet another highly educated *cura* who did not know Nahuatl. Although the viceroy had the power to overrule the cabildo and archbishop's decisions, he apparently took no action in this case.[59]

Though the Xaltocan parishioners' petition was unsuccessful, it shows that they were willing to take action against Mendrice's linguistic incompetency—action that might have pushed him to learn Nahuatl. They may have expressed their discontent to him previously, or perhaps even taken litigious actions against him. The fact that he learned Nahuatl while in Xaltocan suggests that his parishioners' insistence may have been a factor in his decision to study the language. However, Mendrice's studies must not have been very thorough; if his parishioners' qualms are any indication, by the time he vacated the benefice he still could not communicate with them effectively. Moreover, he received a low grade of "third" on his Nahuatl exam for the 1709 benefice competition.[60] If Mendrice's parishioners had convinced him to learn their language, their power to ensure that he became skilled at it was limited.

Although priests of substantial wealth and education like Mendrice did sometimes learn native languages, they rarely dwelled on them long in their *méritos*, nor did they highlight any hardship they might have endured while administering difficult parishes. For example, Marcos Reynel Hernández—who was wealthy enough to become ordained a *título de suficiencia* (on the strength of his own personal wealth)—devoted most of his lengthy 1739 *méritos* to his extensive academic accomplishments. In addition to having a

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[59] *Ibid*.
[60] Manuel Mendrice, AGN, BN 338, exp. 2 (1709-10).

doctorate, he had competed for multiple professorship positions and had participated in numerous public lectures and debates. After describing his educational qualifications at length, Reynel noted that he had administered two parishes—Real y Minas de Zacualpan and San Matheo Texcaliacac (both located in what is now the State of Mexico)—spending less than a year in each, before receiving the benefice of Real y Minas de Temascaltepec, also in the State of Mexico.[61]

Reynel's *méritos* touched only briefly upon the hardship he experienced while working as a parish priest. He felt that Temascaltepec was a difficult parish: "The roughness of [Temascaltepec's] paths and the distance of its pastoral visits being no obstacle, he fulfilled precisely the obligations of his position…" However, Reynel's complaints ended there. Instead, he described at length his accomplishments in Temascaltepec, most of them monetary. In addition to preaching sermons and fulfilling his other duties, he had donated an altar, various linens, and other items to the parish church, and also used his own money to maintain a school for indigenous parishioners. Similarly, Reynel noted that he had suffered from ill health working in Iztapalapa a few years later; however, he had complied with his obligations, founded a confraternity, and "gave various treasures to [his parishioners'] church from his own pocket."[62]

Reynel spoke Nahuatl, but he appears to have thought this qualification less relevant than the adornments he had donated to his parish churches. His *méritos* relegated his language skills to a single sentence, which stated that he had passed a Nahuatl exam

[61] Marcos Reynel Hernández, AGN, BN 603, exp. 12 (1739).
[62] *Ibid*.

for a benefice competition in 1726.[63] Given Reynel's extensive educational accomplishments, his parish experience, and his ability to pay for his own ordination as well as improvements for his parish, he saw no need to accentuate his ability to speak Nahuatl. His Nahuatl skills appear to have provided padding for his *méritos*, and little more. He must have felt that this would not be essential to earning him a benefice, especially compared with his other, much more illustrious achievements, such as providing "treasures" to local churches.

Clerics like Reynel might also have avoided dwelling upon their linguistic abilities for fear that it could associate them with indigenous peoples, or with the large underclass of poor and undereducated *lengua* priests. As the Introduction and Chapters Three and Five indicate, certain facets of "Indianness" came under attack in the mid- to late-18th century in particular, as ecclesiastical reformers became concerned that indigenous religious and cultural practices were interfering with native "progress." This distaste for Indianness seems to have applied to some extent to indigenous languages: as Chapter Three shows, some ecclesiastical reformers saw indigenous languages as inferior and unable to communicate the tenets of Christianity. Moreover, as I demonstrate in this chapter, a persistent clerical language ideology bound native tongues closely with the clerical proletariat. By barely mentioning his language skills in his *méritos*, Reynel may have sought to distance himself from both indigenous "inferiority" and the lowly reputation of *lengua* priests.

[63] *Ibid*.

## "THE ARDUOUS AND DIFFICULT STUDY": LANGUAGE-LEARNING AS AN INTELLECTUAL ACHIEVEMENT

While some priests distanced themselves from their language skills, others emphasized them in hopes of making up for shortfalls in their qualifications. This was particularly the case for clerics who did not have the money to pursue extensive academic work. The priests mentioned above were among the precious few who had the dual privilege of both a graduate degree and substantial wealth. Unfortunately for many *curas*, however, educational achievements were sometimes of limited worth without monetary backing. A priest's status as an academic and theologian was much more valuable if he continued to participate in scholarly life by partaking in lectures, public debates, and other intellectual pursuits. This appears to have been the case even for *curas*, whose parish duties in theory should have kept them busy—and, usually, distant from the capital city, where most intellectual life took place. The *méritos* of parish priests with doctorates suggest that these scholarly urban activities cost a substantial amount of not only time, but also money—money that not all well-educated priests were lucky enough to have. It is not clear what about these activities was expensive, or exactly how much such functions would have cost, but clerics' méritos make clear that participating in public debates, exams and graduation ceremonies could be expensive. Clerics who could not afford to continue their scholarly pursuits were less illustrious than their wealthier colleagues; if they could not maintain their presence in the academic community, the prestige and relevance of their academic accomplishments soon eroded.

Some priests in this precarious situation learned a native tongue, in hope that doing so would count as an educational achievement and bolster their status as learned candidates for the archbishopric's benefices. For example, Dr. Miguel de Araujo, who applied for a benefice in 1768, had numerous educational accomplishments: he had delivered many lectures, and participated in several debates. However, he could not afford to continue these scholarly pursuits after entering parish administration, which may explain why he received a mere "second" on his *suficiencia* exam for the 1768 competition. At the end of his *méritos*, he begged the archbishop to consider that, if he could have, he would have continued to participate in "these literary functions, whose course and actions cannot be maintained without spending the high cost that they necessarily demand…" He had been supporting his academic participation "without more assets than his own savings, without more refuge or fomentation than his hard work…"[64]

It is unlikely that Araujo grew up in poverty, given that he attained a doctorate; but over time, it seems, maintaining his presence in academia proved too expensive for him to manage. Moreover, by the time Araujo entered the benefice competition in 1768, he appears to have been out of a job: he noted that he had participated in one previous competition, but he did not mention a current position.[65] Lacking income or a job, and with his academic clout fading by the day, Araujo had to find a way to present himself as a top candidate in spite of his recent setbacks.

[64] Miguel de Araujo, AGN, BN, 603, exp. 5 (1768).
[65] *Ibid*.

Dr. Araujo sought to offset his recently limited participation in scholarly life by emphasizing what he *had* accomplished academically. He did so in part by describing his past educational achievements in substantial detail, even stating that he had studied with a renowned legal scholar. He also highlighted what he saw as his sole recent academic achievement: learning Nahuatl. "In a very brief time," wrote Araujo, he had "acquainted himself with the rules of grammar…" He also noted that he had learned Nahuatl with the help of "one of the most celebrated and modern masters" of the language. Under the tutelage of this unnamed scholar, Araujo learned to administer to Nahuatl-speaking parishioners, "memorizing the prayers, sacraments, commandments, articles, and the rest of the rudiments of our holy faith…"[66] Whereas priests like the aforementioned Reynel had both the educational and financial backing to either learn a language or not as they saw fit, for Araujo, Nahuatl was a much-needed asset. He may not have known the language particularly well beyond memorizing the sentences he would need to serve his future parishioners. Yet Araujo's *méritos* highlighted his linguistic prowess anyway: it served as evidence that he still associated with distinguished scholars, and that he had both the dedication and the intelligence to pick up a new field of study with speed and relative ease.

It is impossible to tell how well Araujo's strategy worked, as results are not available for the benefice competition for which he submitted his *méritos*. The case of Dr. Miguel de Urías Villavicencio, however, suggests that priests who learned languages to make up for academic shortfalls could sometimes work in a priest's favor. Much like

[66] *Ibid*.

Araujo, Urías was well-educated but lacked the financial capacity to maintain his role in scholarly life. His 1710 *méritos* stated that he had hoped to become a professor after earning his bachelor's degree. However, "his poverty and lack of income prevented him from following the course of applying to professorships…" Instead, he "followed that of *curas*" and received the Nahuatl-speaking benefice of Cacalotenango (in modern-day Guerrero) in 1701. While there, he worked on his doctorate, finally earning it in 1703. However, upon application, Urías had not participated in the academic sphere in any way since then—and that had been seven years prior.[67]

Much like Araujo, Urías sought to use his language skills as a counterbalance to his poverty and withdrawal from the scholarly sphere, even though he was far from an expert in Nahuatl. It is not clear whether Urías studied Nahuatl before working in Cacalotenango, or if he learned it from his parishioners; he must have managed to acquire a reasonable working knowledge of the language, if not absolute fluency, as he received a grade of "second" on his Nahuatl exam for the 1710 benefice competition. Urías's *méritos* stated his hope that authorities would forgive his lack of recent academic participation because he had fulfilled his parish obligations—which he had accomplished "to ease the royal conscience, as well as his own"—and had undertaken "the arduous and difficult study of the [Nahuatl] language."[68] Highlighting both the fact that he spoke Nahuatl and the difficulty of learning it helped Urías to frame himself as both dedicated

[67] Miguel de Urías Villavicenzio, AGN, BN 338, exp. 2 (1709-1710).
[68] *Ibid*.

and intellectual: it showed that he was willing to undertake a formidable task for the sake of his calling, and that he had the capacity to learn something complex.

Urías' plea appears to have worked: the archbishop granted him the aforementioned parish of Temascaltepec, the same benefice that Reynel would occupy later on. The Church had designated Temascaltepec as a second-class parish, which normally meant it provided a living somewhere in between wretched and comfortable. It was also one of the parishes Urías had requested.[69] Yet, as Chapter Four demonstrates, clerics with doctorates often received the archbishopric's most desirable parishes, from which Temascaltepec was a far cry. Without the financial backing to maintain his academic participation or make generous donations to his parishioners, a decent (but not great) parish might have been the best that Urías could expect. Learning Nahuatl may have helped him achieve this: it was an inexpensive way to demonstrate his continued commitment to learning and to his parishioners.

Priests with less impressive academic records than Araujo and Urías often highlighted their language skills in a similar fashion, using them as a means to bolster their reputations as scholars and quick learners. Unlike Araujo and Urías, Joseph Fernández Cueto Villanueva did not have a graduate degree, nor was the educational section of his 1768 *méritos* especially impressive. Fernández lacked the wealth to support his own ordination and consequently was unable to obtain a *capellanía*. Knowing his only other option was to seek ordination *a título de idioma*, "he applied himself with particular determination to learn the Mexican language [Nahuatl] at the Seminary

[69] *Ibid* and Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred*, 481.

College…"[70] Just as Dr. Araujo had bragged about studying with a well-known Nahuatl master, Fernández boasted that he had learned the language from Carlos de Tapía Zenteno, a renowned linguist who published confession manuals and grammars in both Nahuatl and Huastecan. According to his *méritos,* Fernández excelled in Nahuatl classes, impressing Tapía such that the respected professor asked him to give a public panegyric (oration) in Nahuatl, in memory of the apparition of the Virgin of Guadalupe.[71] Fernández's impressive linguistic accomplishments under the tutelage of a respected scholar gave him a means to present himself as relatively learned in spite of his comparatively meager academic record. His Nahuatl skills could not possibly place him on par with a priest holding a doctorate. But given his limited wealth, it was one of the few tools Fernández had for convincing archbishops and examining committees that he was a prime candidate for a benefice.

## LANGUAGE LEARNING AS A LAST RESORT

Fernández learned Nahuatl primarily because he believed that becoming ordained *a título de idioma* was his only option for becoming a priest. He was not alone in doing so.[72] Another priest who only sought ordination *a título de idioma* because he had to was Mariano Esteban Galbán, who applied for a benefice in a 1768 competition. His *méritos*

[70] Joseph Fernández Cueto, AGN, BN, 603, exp. 5 (1768).
[71] *Ibid*.
[72] Ordination records themselves make clear that *título de idioma* was an option men fell back on only if they had no other means to ordination. For instance, a record proving that Juan Chimal Ramírez was ordained to subdeacon in 1707 included a note from the individual who examined him in Mazahua. The examiner noted that Chimal was taking a language exam "because he has no *capellanía*…" AGN, BN 298, exp. 1.

indicate that, despite showing promise in school, his poverty impeded his career prospects as a clergyman. Originally from Mexico City, Esteban completed his courses for his bachelor's degree at the Colegio de San Juan de Letran. He did well in school and finished at the top of his class on a final exam, despite suffering "a furious burning fever"—an illness resulting, he thought, from the fact that he had "worked hard studying every night." Upon graduating in 1752, one of his teachers selected him to discuss in public the material he had learned in class. However, the high cost of participating in such events and his own low funds prevented him from accepting the invitation.[73]

Economic difficulties continued to plague Esteban later on, and consequently he decided to learn Nahuatl. In 1753 he sought ordination, but, "seeing that a *capellanía* to which he had rights had dwindled, he had to study a language…" In other words, because his *capellanía* could no longer sustain him economically, his only option for ordination was to learn a language and follow the *título de idioma* path.[74] After studying Nahuatl at the Seminary College, Esteban became ordained to the minor orders in 1754, by right of both *capellanía* and language, supplementing his partial chaplaincy with his newfound Nahuatl skills. He made clear that learning a language was not a choice; rather, it was a direct result of his limited wealth and dwindling *capellanía*.

It seems that Esteban never mastered Nahuatl. He did so poorly on his language exam for the 1768 benefice competition that the examiners merely indicated that he was a

[73] Mariano Esteban Galbán, AGN, BN 603, exp. 5 (1768).
[74] *Ibid*.

"beginner" at Nahuatl, rather than assigning him an actual grade.[75] Still, his limited knowledge does not appear to have prevented him from becoming ordained *a título de idioma* fourteen years previous, nor from using it to administer the sacraments to native parishioners. In 1757, he became a full presbyter and obtained temporary licenses to confess in both Spanish and Nahuatl, and he would later put his limited Nahuatl skills to use, providing confession to sick indigenous peoples in Mexico City's Acordada prison.[76]

Similarly, José de Ortega studied Otomi so he could achieve ordination *a título de idioma*—not because he wanted to, he insisted, but because he was poor and thus had no other means to ordination. Ortega's 1798 *méritos* noted that his father had died when he was only one and a half years old, leaving Ortega and his mother to rely on an uncle for monetary support. The uncle could only provide so much, however. With limited funds, Ortega struggled to get through grammar and philosophy studies for his Bachelor's degree, and "he found himself needing to study the Otomi language…" After spending three years learning Otomi at the Royal Seminary College, Ortega became ordained on the strength of his language skills.[77] Like many other clerics in the archbishopric, Ortega had studied a native language because he believed he had to. It was a highly undesirable choice, but the only practical way for a man of limited education and wealth to launch a career as a priest.

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[75] In the space allotted for Esteban's language exam grade, the examiners wrote only "Princ. [principios] Mexicano." *Ibid*.
[76] *Ibid*.
[77] José de Ortega, AGN, BN 363, exp. 4 (1798).

## A Burden Too Difficult Even for Angels: Suffering and Perseverance

It was a small wonder that many clerics sought ordination *a título de idioma* only if they absolutely had to: the life of this sort of priest was rarely an easy one, especially during the first years of his career. As mentioned previously, men ordained in this fashion normally ended up working in the archbishopric's most distant and most difficult parishes. Most served as *vicarios* for most or all of their careers. As Taylor demonstrates, men ordained *a título de idioma* "had little hope of moving into a parish benefice. If they did so, with few exceptions it was after many years of service and in one of the poorest or most isolated parishes."[78]

Priests who were relatively poor and undereducated—and especially those ordained *a título de idioma*—were much less likely than their more qualified counterparts to highlight their education or generous donations to their parishioners in their *méritos*. It seems obvious enough that these clerics would instead highlight their parish work: they may have lacked prestigious academic achievements, but many priests in this position had extensive experience working with parishioners. Yet, rather than framing their job experience as the source of a skill set that would prove useful for their next benefice, as one might expect, many of these clerics instead highlighted the terrible conditions under which they had worked and the poverty they had endured, sometimes complaining for pages on end. Many even went so far as to beg the archbishop for a benefice, asking him to choose based on charity and mercy more than qualifications.

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[78] Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred*, 118. Similarly, Rodolfo Aguirre Salvador notes that *lengua* priests often had difficulty ascending the ecclesiastical hierarchy, and few held their own parishes. Aguirre Salvador, *Un clero en transición*, 214.

There are two reasons priests of limited wealth and education might have dedicated so much space in their *méritos* to their own suffering. First, this tactic allowed lowly clerics to demonstrate that they could handle the trials of working in difficult parishes. While more learned priests had the theological training to serve their parishioners, their schooling could not have prepared them to survive epidemics, walk for miles on difficult roads, or cross rough waters to save the souls of their parishioners. Those who had endured years of hard work in far-flung parishes had solid proof that they were willing and able to endure in such circumstances and overcome any and all obstacles to ensure the spiritual wellbeing of their flocks. Given how many of the archbishopric's parishes were located in geographically rough areas, it might have seemed wise to examiners and archbishops in some cases to fill benefices with priests who they knew would not flee at the first sign of hardship or danger.

Second, many priests likely believed that suffering was what made the job worth doing. Most of the archbishropic's *curas* owned a copy of not only the Bible, but also the *Itinerario para parochos de indios*: a manual of priests' duties written by Alonso de la Peña Montenegro, bishop of Quito, and first published in 1668.[79] One of the very first sections of the book described the difficulty of serving as a parish priest, using hyperbolic language that made clerics seem like martyrs. Montenegro quoted the decrees of the Council of Trent—another volume that priests frequently carried with them—which stated that being a parish priest was "such a laborious burden that the shoulders of angels

[79] Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred*, 153.

were afraid to carry it."[80] Montenegro argued that shouldering this burden was a Christ-like act, stating that serving as a parish priest "is so difficult and overwhelming that Jesus Christ himself felt its incomparable weight" when he served as the "*cura*" and guardian of disciples who he knew would betray him.[81] According to Montenegro, Christ suffered in part because he was responsible for the souls of his disciples, just as parish priests were entrusted with the souls of their parishioners. Thus, simply by doing their jobs, *curas* were taking on a task so great that even Christ himself had struggled under its weight. Montenegro's comparison between parish priests' suffering and that of Christ must have made many parish priests feel that their calling was a noble one. It required levels of selflessness and dedication that were almost inhuman, but, according to Montenegro, that made their work all the more important.

Montenegro's praise for *curas'* angelic endurance must have appealed to poor and undereducated priests in particular, since they often worked in heavily indigenous parishes. Montenegro believed that taking on responsibility for native souls was especially difficult, because these were "souls so inclined to stray, whether for their propensity for drunkenness, sorcery, superstitions and empty observances, or for their inclination for idolatry and heathen rites, or for their sensuality…" Apparently, native parishioners were given to these indecent habits "because of their meager ability and forgetfulness that they suffer in everything related to their salvation…"[82] Montenegro saw parish priests as doctors for the soul; since he thought indigenous peoples were

[80] Alonso de la Peña Montenegro, *Itinerario para parochos de indios*, 1668. Libro I, Tratado I, Session III, num. 2-4.
[81] *Ibid*, Libro I, Tratado I, Session III, num. 2-4.
[82] *Ibid*, Libro I, Tratado I, Session III, num. 5.

especially prone to spiritual "illness," caring for their souls was much more hazardous than caring for those of Spaniards.[83] As a result, Montenegro appears to have thought, priests who served indigenous parishes were highly likely to endure the same suffering that Christ did when he realized he had failed his disciples. According to his *Itinerario*, few tasks were more harrowing than bearing responsibility for the souls of native parishioners.

Many of the archbishopric's less-privileged *curas* took this idea to heart, romanticizing the difficulty of their jobs to prove that they were worthy of a benefice. This was especially the case for clerics ordained *a título de idioma*. One such priest is the aforementioned José de Ortega, ordained by right of the Otomi language. Ortega had worked for ten years as a *vicario* and another 21 as a parish priest, sometimes traversing dangerous paths to reach his parishioners—journeys that he described in great detail. For instance, one afternoon, while working as a *vicario* in San Juan del Rio (northwest of Mexico City in modern-day Querétaro), he left on horseback to conduct confessions at a distant hacienda. On his way "his horse bolted, throwing him on the ground, and giving him a very serious blow, which left him without feeling for more than an hour, and those present thought him dead."[84] The incident left him so frail that he spent the next six months recovering in Mexico City, unable to administer the parish. After resuming his

[83] *Ibid*.
[84] José de Ortega, AGN, BN 363, exp. 4 (1798).

duties, Ortega spent much of the rest of his career working under less-than-ideal circumstances, enduring epidemics and "intolerable" climates.[85]

Ortega's *méritos* highlighted not only the hardship he faced during his parish work, but also his willingness to face it for the sake of his parishioners. During his tenure as *cura* of Tolimanejo (also in Querétaro), an epidemic hit the area, and he was left to provide confession and last rites for all his dying parishioners by himself, having recently let go of his sole *vicario*. Despite the enormity of the task, not a single parishioner died without confessing. Ortega also worked to ensure that his parishioners' poverty did not endanger the wellbeing of their souls. When his indigenous parishioners in Tolimanejo were unable to come up with the money to repair their church, Ortega found a way to get the job done more cheaply than they had expected. Although he was relatively poor, he donated his own money for an image of Christ, John, and Mary Magdalene for his parishioners in Tolimanejo. During various epidemics he asked his *vicarios* to bury and baptize parishioners for free if they could not afford the fee.[86] With these stories, Ortega portrayed himself as saint-like: according to his account, throughout his career he had sacrificed his health, worked long hours, and gave away what little money he had—all for the sake of his parishioners' souls.

Some *méritos* placed even more emphasis on the poverty and hard work that *título de idioma* clerics suffered, framing the priest in question as a hero willing to overcome almost impossible obstacles. Andrés Bernal de Salvatierra was one such priest. Bernal

[85] *Ibid*.
[86] *Ibid*.

grew up with limited wealth, which made it difficult for him to finish school. His *méritos*, which he submitted for a benefice competition in 1710, indicate that he began his education in Mexico City, studying grammar at the Colegio Máximo de San Pedro y San Pablo. He wrote that he finished the course "with extreme effort, because my parents were poor, I lived in the Valley [of Ixtlahuaca, in the modern-day State of Mexico], and I could not feed myself, sustaining myself only with the food given to the poor in the parlors of the del Carmen and San Diego monasteries…"[87]Despite his efforts, Bernal's limited funds prevented him from graduating from his philosophy course—and, thus, from becoming a priest. "Finding myself in extreme poverty," he wrote, he could only beg Archbishop Francisco de Aguiar y Seixas for help. Responding favorably to Bernal's plea, the archbishop allowed him to take exams in *suficiencia* and the Mazahua language, and ordained him *a título de idioma*. Although it is unclear where he learned Mazahua, it is possible that he grew up speaking it, since it was common in the Ixtlahuaca region. It is also uncertain how Bernal's education progressed after that. The competition records indicate that he had a bachelor's degree, so he must have managed to finish it in spite of his economic circumstances. His grade of "second" on his theology exam suggests the same. Regardless of his educational qualifications, in 1693 Bernal became a presbyter on the strength of his language skills, and obtained a license to conduct confession.[88]

However, life as *a título de idioma* priest was difficult, and it did not ease Bernal's economic woes. Obliged to work without pay for a time in exchange for his

[87] Andrés Bernal de Salvatierra, AGN, BN 338, exp. 2 (1710).
[88] *Ibid*.

ordination, Bernal went to serve as a *vicario* in Atlacomulco (in what is now the State of Mexico), assisting a priest named Juan de Ichanequi, who apparently left him to do all the work. Bernal administered there for six years, "carrying the full weight of the parish all on my own, preaching and teaching Christian doctrine in the aforementioned Mazahua language, and teaching the natives good customs…"[89] During this time, wrote Bernal, "I carried on in this administration without any salary," and did so "…for the sole purpose of fulfilling the obligation I took on in having been ordained by right of the aforementioned language…"[90] Unfortunately for Bernal, his contractual duties as a minister ordained *a título de idioma* left him little choice but to take on Ichanequi's responsibilities—and to do so without pay. Later on he served as a *vicario* in Xocotitlán (State of Mexico), with similar working conditions. Once again, the ineptitude of the beneficed priest made Bernal's job difficult. His work there was labor-intensive "because I was the only minister, since the… *cura* did not know the language…"[91] The pressure of taking on the entire parish himself had deleterious consequences for his health, and he eventually had to leave so that he could recover.

Bernal made sure to emphasize that he had persevered in spite of his poor health, poverty, and excessive workload. Upon recovering from his illness, he returned once again to Atlacomulco, "with the vigilance and zeal that I have always had in administering the holy sacraments, without salary nor [with] temporal interests, until the

[89] *Ibid*.
[90] *Ibid*.
[91] *Ibid*.

end of 1709."[92] At the beginning of the following year he moved to Xiquipilco (State of Mexico), where he was entrusted with half the parish. There, he preached and taught Christian doctrine in Mazahua and Otomi, eliciting "great improvement" in his parishioners.[93] Willingly, Bernal had sacrificed his health and wellbeing, his "vigilance and zeal" never waning—and he had done so, it seemed, for the sake of his parishioners' souls.

Bernal concluded his *méritos* by making an appeal to the archbishop's generosity—in part for his own sake, but also for his poor family, God, and the Church. He asked the archbishop to consider the plight of his impoverished family, who were in desperate need of his financial support:

> I beg your righteousness, not out of justice, but out of mercy, as I find myself with an insufficient basis for my priestly sustenance; I am extremely poor, and on my meager shoulders are my parents, my maiden sisters, and many poor nieces and nephews, whom God has willed to be under my care…[94]

He then argued that his own benefice would help him not only feed his family, but also fulfill his obligations as *a título de idioma* priest: "with your protection I will achieve, spiritually, a title with which to fulfill the ministry to which I am obliged; and, temporally, relief for me and the aforementioned poor."[95] Here, Bernal's *méritos* suggested that he had pledged his whole life to the church and to his family; he needed a benefice not for his own comfort, but so that he could serve God, fulfill his obligations to the church, and relieve his suffering relatives. Even in benefitting from the archbishop's

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[92] *Ibid*.
[93] *Ibid*.
[94] *Ibid*.
[95] *Ibid*.

mercy, his *méritos* suggested, he was sacrificing himself for the sake of others. Bernal's desperate plea appears to have worked: in 1710 he received the benefice of San Francisco Ixtlahuaca, located west of Mexico City in what is now the State of Mexico.

Even more theatrical were the *méritos* of the previously-mentioned Bernardino Pablo López de Escovedo. He devoted most of his seven-page 1749 *méritos* to stories of the excessive hardship he felt he had endured as a parish priest. López de Escovedo was one of the many clerics who fell back on ordination *a título de idioma* because he lacked the funds for other alternatives. He had done well in school, and applied to become a professor of rhetoric. Although faculty members voted to select him for the position, he was unable to accept it because he was poor, and thus could not afford "the costs that are presented in such functions."[96] Fortunately, López de Escovedo knew Nahuatl and Otomi, so in 1732 the archbishop ordained him to the minor orders *a título de idioma*.

López de Escovedo complained extensively about the horrors he had experienced as a *cura* during epidemics. He was working in the aforementioned parish of Xaltocan (a benefice Mendrice had previously held) when the Matlazahuatl epidemic began in 1737. At that time, the *cura* who employed him fell ill and left López de Escovedo to handle the parish on his own—a significant task, especially since the epidemic meant that he had an enormous number of confessions to conduct for dying parishioners. According to his *méritos*, this time was so difficult that, "if he were to express all that he suffered, the truth would seem like hyperbolic praise, or the express fiction of an incredible idea…"[97] He

[96] Bernardino Pablo López de Escovedo, AGN, BN 199, exp. 12 (1749).
[97] *Ibid*.

elaborated nevertheless, stating that López de Escovedo became so busy conducting last rites that, "three days of the week, he could not eat more than a mug of chocolate, from the… time when he went out—two in the morning—until he got back at eleven or twelve the next night…"[98]

During his long working hours, López de Escovedo was surrounded by death. According to his account, his indigenous parishioners were afraid to touch the corpses of their brethren, and often refused to bring him the bodies of the dead. To ease their fears, "although dressed in a cloak and surplice, he lifted the dead with his own hands, placing them in the casket," so that they could be buried. At other times, López de Escovedo brought the ill together so he could deliver last rites for all of them at the same time. To ensure that parishioners did not overhear one another during this private ritual, the priest "was obliged to use his sash to cover his face and that of the sick person, suffering the intolerable smell and sweat that they left imprinted upon his face…"[99]

The epidemic soon reached the island of Xaltocan, which lay in the midst of the now-defunct Lake Xaltocan. In a little *chalupa* (a small canoe), López de Escovedo and a sacristan (church caretaker) traversed the lake's choppy waters to conduct confession for the island's sick and dying. The stormy lake proved too much for the small boat: during the hour-and-a-half-long journey, "the waves came up with such ferocity that the boat was about to sink…"[100] The sacristan "went along draining the canoe with his hat

[98] *Ibid*.
[99] *Ibid*.
[100] *Ibid*.

unceasingly," and managed to keep them more or less afloat. [101] Meanwhile, López de Escovedo found himself submerged in water, heroically holding up the consecrated host in hopes of keeping it dry. Finally, they arrived at island and, "by the divine and immense piety of the Lord, even with all these dangers and discomforts… not one sick person died without having first received the Sacraments of Penance and Last Rites."[102] According to the *cura*'s account, he had ensured that every dying soul on the island was prepared to enter the next life.

López de Escovedo's *méritos* suggested that serving indigenous parishioners magnified significantly the health risks of his profession. The parishioners he served over the course of his career were probably mostly *indios*, as he tended to work in remote, heavily indigenous areas. His *méritos* made evident the link between indigenous parishioners and difficult, hazardous work. For instance, he noted that the "uncivilized" (by which he likely meant indigenous) homes in the remote parish of Tlachichilco (in modern-day Veracruz) could not be reached by horse. To provide confession to these areas, he had to walk on foot with "enormous effort" on paths that could last a league or more. Even worse, these parishioners often lived "in places where it was necessary to climb up reeds fashioned into ropes."[103] López de Escovedo had similar difficulties while working in Huayacocotla (also in Veracruz), "preaching and confessing throughout the district in the Otomi and Nahuatl languages, and confessing parishioners in the Tepehua

[101] *Ibid*.
[102] *Ibid*.
[103] *Ibid*.

language…"[104] To do all this preaching and confessing for indigenous parishioners, he had to travel a 15-league route (more than 46 miles) through each town in the parish, "without fearing the very dangerous paths that that district has, or the continuous rains…"[105] On one occasion, he even found himself "hanging onto a branch on the edge of a precipice, because the horse had gotten stuck… leaving the saddle on the precipice from the force of his turning around."[106] He had endured all this, it seemed, for the sake of "uncivilized" and difficult-to-reach indigenous parishioners.

Indeed, López de Escovedo reserved his most melodramatic posturing for describing the most remote and most heavily indigenous areas he worked in. After spending seven pages detailing all the hardship he had endured as a parish priest, his *méritos* ended by suggesting that these spectacular stories could not possibly capture the full extent of his misery. López de Escovedo claimed that he had many other stories of hardship, which he had omitted "so as not to be more bothersome…" It would suffice, he thought, "to say that he has administered for 16 years, and of those, four were in the *Sierra* [mountains], which only those who have experienced it can understand sufficiently." [107] *Sierra* was the term parish priests used most often to refer to the most remote and heavily indigenous areas of the archbishopric, and the least desirable areas to work. Most such parishes were likely part of the Sierra Gorda—a rugged, mountainous area that extends from modern-day Querétaro and Guanajuato over to San Luis Potosí

[104] *Ibid*.
[105] *Ibid*.
[106] *Ibid*.
[107] *Ibid*.

and Hidalgo in north-central Mexico. López de Escovedo portrayed his experience in this region as the worst penance a parish priest could endure. He believed that four years in the heavily-indigenous Sierra proved his commitment to the Church beyond a doubt.

Although they did not always make the connection explicitly, *méritos* that emphasized a priest's poverty, discomfort and hard work usually pointed to ordination *a título de idioma* as a major source of their troubles. Melchor López de Cárdenas, who applied for a benefice competition in 1709, made this link perfectly clear. His *méritos* explained that he had impoverished siblings and nephews to feed, and had no means to care for them, "having no *capellanía*, nor any other stipend, because I was ordained *a título del idioma* Mazahua." He begged the archbishop for a benefice to help feed his family, appealing to "the customary piety and zeal of the graciousness of your lordship grace."[108] López's appeal makes clear that, while clerics' knowledge of a native tongue might have secured them a career, it also frequently condemned them to a life of relative poverty. Consequently, clergymen ordained *a título de idioma* normally devoted more of their *méritos* to begging than to bragging. In place of educational qualifications, what these men had to offer was immense dedication, of the sort that Montenegro lauded in his *Itinerario para parochos*. They may not have had doctorates, but they were willing to endure the life of a *título de idioma* cleric, and all the poverty, illness, physical danger and hard work that their calling entailed.

[108] Melchor López de Cárdenas, AGN, BN 338, exp. 2 (1709).

## "Persuaded to Obey Both Majesties": Indigenous Languages as Weapons against "Indianness"

Given their difficult lives, *título de idioma* priests could portray themselves to authorities not only as selfless and dedicated, but also as necessary for the spiritual wellbeing of the archbishopric. *Lengua* priests often reminded archbishops and examiners in their *méritos* that, by knowing a native language and using it to evangelize and administer their parishes, they were spreading the faith and sometimes even "pacifying" or "civilizing" disobedient indigenous peoples. In doing so, these clerics suggested that their language skills were both useful and necessary: they not only improved orthodoxy and ensured the wellbeing of their parishioners' souls, but also produced "better," less "Indian" indigenous peoples who were more easily subjected to the authority of Church and Crown. The priests who had the linguistic prowess, people skills, and commitment to work with "uncivilized" *indios* in remote communities tended to emphasize these traits in their *méritos*, to ensure that the prelate knew their worth.

This was case for a number of the above-mentioned priests who complained at length in their *méritos*: they highlighted not only their language skills, but also the value of those skills for the archbishopric. The aforementioned Andrés Bernal de Salvatierra did so by stating that working in native languages was an act of conscience. In his *méritos* he listed a variety of available benefices as his preferences, all of which were home to speakers of Mazahua or Otomi. "…To directly ease my conscience," he wrote, "I am turning out for those administered in the aforementioned Otomi and Mazahua

languages, which I speak."[109] By describing his application for Mazahua and Otomi benefice as "easing his conscience," Bernal suggested that he was morally obliged to put his language skills to good use in one of the archbishopric's parishes. He must have meant that Otomi- and Mazahua-speaking parishioners' souls were at stake; his ability to communicate with these individuals meant that he could do more for them spiritually than could a cleric who did not know these tongues.

The previously-mentioned Bernardino Pablo López de Escovedo took a somewhat different tactic, instead emphasizing the progress he had instilled in his parishioners by preaching and confessing in native languages. His *méritos* stated that, while working in Xaltocan, he had always explained Christian doctrine during mass "in the Nahuatl language with complete clarity and distinction, the parishioners receiving his teaching with such love and joy that they outwardly demonstrated their progress sufficiently…" They had made such progress, he said, because he had "removed the various errors they had been steeped in as a result of their abuses." Similarly, while working in Tepozotlan (in what is now the State of Mexico), López de Escovedo preached "every Sunday and festival day in the Otomi language, with great results and improvement for listeners…" On one occasion, his sermon resulted in "extraordinary demonstrations from his listeners in repenting their sins."[110] His efforts as a priest's assistant met similar success in

[109] Andrés Bernal de Salvatierra, AGN, BN 338, exp. 2 (1710).
[110] Bernardino Pablo López de Escovedo, AGN, BN 199, exp. 12 (1749).

Teoloyuca (State of Mexico), Tesayuca (Hidalgo), Hueypustla (State of Mexico) and Tolcayuca (Hidalgo), where he preached in Nahuatl, Otomi and Spanish.[111]

López de Escovedo achieved even more with native languages in the remote parish of Tlachichilco (Veracruz), where he went to work in 1745. Although already an accomplished linguist, he began to learn the Tepehua language when he arrived in Tlachichilco. He helped administer the parish using both Otomi and Tepehua, and "through his effort and determination, in the span of one year and six months, he came to be able to confess the Tepehuas with sufficient understanding…" In the process, he managed to instill what he considered impressive spiritual progress in his parishioners. López de Escovedo's *méritos* noted that he had managed to get them to do the devotional prayers of the Seven Sorrows of Mary "with complete solemnity." He also convinced them to stage processions representing the death and passion of Christ, "which had never before been seen in that place."[112] The implication was that López de Escovedo's impressive preaching skills, combined with his mastery of various native tongues, allowed him to achieve much more with native parishioners than the average priest. His *méritos* suggested that his linguistic abilities were critical for reforming what he considered unorthodox religious practices.

Other *lengua* priests touted not only their parishioners' spiritual progress, but also their temporal development: using native tongues, their *méritos* claimed, they had managed to "civilize" or "pacify" indigenous peoples who were otherwise impossible to

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[111] *Ibid*.
[112] *Ibid*.

control. Bernardo Sánchez Hurtado de Mendoza, who applied for a benefice in 1798, used this strategy in his *méritos*. He had little else to offer aside from his linguistic abilities. Like many of the previously mentioned priests, Sánchez Hurtado had grown up poor, and as a result made limited progress in school. He was not even able to begin school until he was 22 years old, and continuously ran into financial difficulties while completing his degree. Unsurprisingly, part of his *méritos* was devoted to detailing the hardship he had endured as a student and as a parish priest. However, what Sánchez lacked in educational accolades, he made up for with linguistic prowess. His *méritos* brought up his language skills repeatedly, and spent an entire paragraph revealing which languages he spoke, how he had learned them, and how well he knew them. Sánchez was trilingual, and his native tongue, "with which he was suckled," was Otomí; later, he had learned Mazahua while living in Malacatepec (Puebla), and Nahuatl in Huayacocotla (in the Huasteca region of Veracruz).[113]

Sánchez Hurtado especially emphasized the utility of his language skills for subjecting unruly indigenous peoples to royal authority. His *méritos* claimed that he had successfully "pacified" indigenous parishioners in distant Huayacocotla, thanks in large part to his expertise with Otomí, Mazahua and Nahuatl. Using prayers and exhortations in parishioners' languages, Sánchez claimed, he had managed to "bring them together [and] calm them down… leaving them persuaded to obey both Majesties [the Church and the Crown], and the ministers who govern them in their name… and convinced to fulfill the

[113] Bernardo Sánchez Hurtado de Mendoza, AGN, BN 1153, exp. 1 (1798).

annual precept, which they had missed for three years…"[114] The cleric noted with pride that such accomplishments had earned him a certification from a colonel and troops inspector from the royal army, which praised Sánchez for "pacifying" Huayacocotla's indigenous residents with zeal and efficiency.[115] Lacking the educational achievements that many parish priests could boast, Sánchez Hurtado's ability to speak three native tongues fluently made him highly valuable to both Church and Crown—although, as noted in Chapter Four, his mission was not terribly successful.

The *méritos* of Miguel Sánchez, who sought a benefice in 1749, also emphasized the utility of his language skills for modifying indigenous social and religious behavior, and saw native languages as a weapon against "Indianness." Like Sánchez Hurtado, Miguel Sánchez had little wealth, was ordained *a título de idioma*, and had no impressive educational achievements. However, his *méritos* explained that preaching in Nahuatl had allowed him to eliminate a "variety of errors" that had been circulating among "the rustics of those poor people"—in other words, indigenous peoples. In Tzompahuacam (Puebla), Sánchez had taught native parishioners not only Christian doctrine, but also the "rules of morality [and] economic and political management." In doing so, he had helped to quell rebellions which, he claimed, had resulted from natives' "savage style."[116] The way Sánchez framed his interactions with native parishioners reveals that he did not see the Nahuatl language as part of indigenous peoples' "savage style"; to the contrary, he

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[114] "…consiguió a fuerza de Predicaciones en sus Ydiomas, exhortaciones y persuasivas, el sacarlos de las Barrancas, juntarlos, aquietarlos, y ponerlos en paz o quietud, dexandolos persuadidos a la obediencia de ambas Majestades, y a los Ministros que en su nombre los governaban, o dirigian, y rreduciendolos al cumplimiento del annual precepto a que havian faltado tres años..." *Ibid*.
[115] *Ibid*.
[116] Miguel Sánchez, AGN, BN 199, exp. 12 (1749).

considered it a conduit for morality and civility. Paradoxically, he had wielded an Indian language against "Indianness"—and, in doing so, had helped cultivate royal control by stifling rebellion.

Indeed, *méritos* indicate that many *curas*, ecclesiastical examiners, archbishops and viceroys saw language skills as a tool for eradicating customs and religious practices they saw as too indigenous to be orthodox, an argument I will return to in Chapter Five. Unlike priests who knew only Spanish and Latin, those who could speak languages like Nahuatl, Otomi or Mazahua could communicate directly with native parishioners who refused to submit to practices that the Church and Crown saw as "civilized," such as living in town or villages, abiding by royal and ecclesiastical authority, and observing the sacraments regularly. As Sánchez's méritos suggest, this communicative ability gave these multilingual clerics the opportunity to quell what they saw as unabated "Indian" savagery.[117] Clerics' *méritos* indicate that *curas* understood well the utility of native tongues for molding popular religion, and for preventing indigenous religious and social practices from leading to unorthodoxy or rebellion.

Clerics' tendency to highlight their language skills as tools of evangelization may well have indicated a desire not only to fulfill the needs of the Crown, but also to serve God by way of whatever means necessary. Plenty of priests were probably legitimately proud that their linguistic abilities helped their indigenous parishioners become more devoted, more orthodox and more obedient Christians. Parishioners' spiritual progress

[117] As the Introduction and Chapter Five demonstrate, some ecclesiastics saw priests' ability to speak to indigenous peoples as especially critical beginning in the mid- to late-18th century, when reformers sought to remodel Catholicism, in part by making popular religious practices less "Indian."

must have helped clerics in a practical sense by proving their ability to address the needs of the Crown; yet it is also entirely possible that many of these priests truly believed in their mission, and saw their language skills as essential tools for saving their parishioners' souls.

## EXCEPTIONS TO THE RULE

Generally speaking, men of the clerical proletariat often had no choice but to learn a native tongue, while priests who were wealthy and well-educated could easily sidestep this requirement. There are plenty of examples that contradict this pattern, however. For instance, priests who were relatively well-educated and managed to avoid ordination *a título de idioma* occasionally had no choice but to learn a native tongue, or complained at length about their difficult parish appointments. Joseph Espino Barros, for example, managed to obtain a *capellanía* to support his ordination, had excelled in school during his Bachelor's degree, and had reason to believe he had a future in academia. In 1743 he participated in an *oposición*, in hopes that this would help him obtain a post as a professor. Instead, the archbishop forced him to take the benefice of Oapan—a remote parish in modern-day Guerrero where residents spoke Nahuatl, a language Espino did not know.[118]

Much like the less-privileged clerics ordained *a título de idioma,* Espino devoted much of his 1749 *méritos* to complaining about the conditions he had worked in and to

[118] Joseph Espino Barrios, AGN, BN 199, exp. 12 (1749).

highlighting his linguistic achievements. "Resigned to obey" the archbishop, Espino moved to the remote Oapan, where he endured "the suffering of finding himself in a place distant from all political trade, inhabited only by Indians, whom he did not understand…" Determined to rectify the problem, he began to study Nahuatl—and did so "with such tenacity, that in two months he knew what was necessary for the administration of the sacraments, and in eight months, to preach…" Espino accomplished all this, his *méritos* indicated, in spite of heat, mosquitos, strange foods, dangerous lizards, and other discomforts that were commonplace in the remote region.[119] Espino is just one example of many *méritos* that do not quite fit the mold outlined in this chapter; some priests were wealthy but had to learn a native tongue, were well-educated but ended up in remote parishes, or were ordained *a título de idioma* but were reasonably well-educated.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter's findings apply more or less evenly to the entire Bourbon period, with limited change over time. In spite (or perhaps because) of the changes wrought by the Bourbon reforms, the close link between indigenous languages and priests who had little money or education remained strong throughout the 18th century and into the early 19th. For this entire period, these relatively underqualified members of the clerical proletariat were still more likely than their more privileged brethren to learn a native

[119] *Ibid.*

language. They were also more likely to highlight the difficulty of their work in their *méritos*. Priests with more substantial wealth and academic accolades still sometimes learned native tongues, but made clear in their *méritos* that this skill was not critical to their career paths. These patterns, too, remained remarkably unchanged throughout the 18th and early 19th centuries.[120] These findings also do not appear to be confined to priests' *méritos*: in their applications for ordination, clerics sometimes begged the archbishop for ordination *a título de idioma* so they could support their poor families.[121]

As mentioned above, plenty of priests did not fit the mold outlined in this chapter. Yet what these *méritos* reveal overall is that not *having* to learn a native language was a privilege. Countless priests had little choice but to learn one, and the careers this led to were far from desirable in the eyes of most clerics. Although knowing an indigenous language could be an asset for any parish priest, these languages were also tainted by their association with the clerical proletariat, and with all the characteristics associated with these men: little learning or financial security, but nearly boundless dedication. As the following two chapters reveal, over the course of the 18th century, these less-privileged clergymen became increasingly undesirable in the eyes of royal and ecclesiastical reformers. These reformers' efforts to transform the Church targeted not only this lower class of priests, but also the patterns of native-language use that betrayed

[120] Some of the benefice competitions I examined had a higher concentration than others of this sort of application, but this appears to have had more to do with the benefices available than with any changes over time in the relationship between native tongues and the clergy. For instance, most of the applicants for the 1749 competition were fairly poor and undereducated and spoke a native tongue, which was most likely the case because most of the available benefices that year were fairly undesirable, with low salaries and remote locations. AGN, BN 199, exp. 12.

[121] See for instance AGN, BN 93, exp. 411 (Joaquín Torrescano y Ruiz) and AGN, BN 992, exp. 49 (Felix de Ayala y Medina).

a cleric's lack of privilege. Thus, the clerical language ideology that linked undereducated priests with native tongues would prove detrimental to both as the 18th century wore on.

# Chapter Two: Language Ideologies in Flux: The Mendicant Orders Face Secularization

On 4 October 1749, King Ferdinand VI ordered that, in the Archbishoprics of Mexico and Lima, the friars of the mendicant orders—the Franciscans, Augustinians and Dominicans—had to transfer their *doctrinas* and conventual churches to the care of the secular clergy.[1] This was not the first time royal and ecclesiastical authorities had demanded secularization in New Spain. At various points as early as the 16th century, both the Crown and various prelates had pushed for friars' removal.[2] Most widely known among these projects is that of Juan de Palafox y Mendoza, the Bishop of Puebla who crusaded against the religious orders in his diocese in the 1640s. Yet, such previous efforts had only been partially effective, and by the mid-18th century, the mendicant orders still held numerous *doctrinas* in New Spain: in the mid-1740s they possessed at least 101 in the Archbishopric of Mexico alone, while the secular clergy held just 88 parishes.[3]

Beginning with Ferdinand VI's 1749 law, however, the religious orders were removed from their holdings in New Spain at an unprecedented rate, due in large part to the fact that Viceroy Revillagigedo the Elder and Archbishop Rubio y Salinas were both

[1] *Doctrinas* were proto-parishes administered by the regular clergy, rather than the secular clergy. In theory, the parishioners of *doctrinas* were neophytes who had already been converted, but were not yet ready to be members of a full parish. In practice, the religious orders often held onto these *doctrinas* well beyond the early stages of parishioners' transition to Catholicism.

[2] For more on these 16th- and 17th-century secularization initiatives, see Margarita Menegus, Francisco Morales and Oscar Mazín, *La secularización de las doctrinas de indios en la Nueva España: la pugna entre las dos iglesias* (México: UNAM, 2010).

[3] Brading, *Church and State*, 62-63.

major supporters of secularization. In 1753, the Crown extended the secularization policy beyond Mexico and Lima to every diocese in the Americas. By 1755, royal and ecclesiastical authorities had forced friars out of 59 *doctrinas* in the Archbishopric of Mexico, plus an additional 50 in Oaxaca, Puebla, Michoacán and Guadalajara combined.[4] By 1805, the mendicants held only nine *doctrinas* in the entire archbishopric.[5] In just a few decades, the ecclesiastical landscape had changed drastically, and especially so in central New Spain. Although the religious orders' strong foothold in major urban areas remained mostly intact, their rural presence had decreased drastically by the mid-18th century.[6] Where the mendicant orders had once dominated, they were now the minority.

Unsurprisingly, this drastic change led to substantial debates between the mendicants orders and royal authorities over whether and how to implement the mid-18th century secularization initiative. In this chapter I analyze these debates to demonstrate how mendicant friars and royal authorities helped alter language ideologies within the Mexican Church. The secularization project is critical to the study of language policy in Bourbon Mexico because the clergy's language competency served as a focal point for deliberations over this dramatic reform effort. Many churchmen considered the mendicants to be more skilled at indigenous languages than their secular counterparts; friars tended to foster this reputation, and it only grew stronger in the early 1750s.

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[4] Christopher Rosenmüller, ""The Indians… Long for Change": ": The Secularization of Regular Parishes in Mid Eighteenth-Century New Spain," in Early Bourbon Spanish America: Politics and Society in a Forgotten Era (1700-1759), ed. Francisco A. Eissa-Barroso and Ainara Vázquez Varela (Boston: Koninklijke Brill, 2013), 149.

[5] Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred*, 84.

[6] Karen Melvin, *Building Colonial Cities of God: Mendicant Orders and Urban Culture in New Spain* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 7-8.

Reformers and friars alike utilized this connection between native languages and the mendicant orders to make their case either for or against secularization.[7] Thus, language policy and secularization became almost inextricably linked. Consequently, the debates over secularization in the mid- to late-18th century provide a helpful window into the changes New Spain's language ideologies and language regime underwent during this period.

Although a number of previous studies have mentioned the role of native languages in debates over secularization, none have explored this role sufficiently.[8] By conducting an in-depth analysis of the language ideologies that friars, their allies and reformers used in their arguments for or against secularization, I bring much-needed specificity to scholars' understanding of the relationship between secularization and language policy during the 18th century. A few scholars have recognized that language policy and secularization were intimately connected. Some have contended that reformers enacted Hispanization laws between the 1750s and 1770s in order to facilitate secularization, while others have argued the inverse.[9] Yet, determining which caused which is akin to determining whether the chicken or egg came first. By focusing on

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[7] Similarly, during debates over secularization in the 16th and 17th centuries, both friars and pro-secularization officials used the clergy's language competency to make their case. The mendicants argued that they knew native languages while the secular clergy did not. Yet, reformist bishops argued that it was the friars, not the diocesan clergy, who had insufficient knowledge of native tongues. Wright Carr, "La política lingüística."

[8] O'Hara, *A Flock Divided*; Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred*; Tanck de Estrada, *Pueblos de indios*; Herrera, "Primary Education."

[9] William Taylor and Dorothy Tanck de Estrada have contended that the language reform laws were intended in part to facilitate secularization, while Matthew O'Hara and Sajid Alfredo Herrera have posited the opposite: that the secularization reforms were meant to encourage Hispanization. Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred*, 96; Tanck de Estrada, *Pueblos de indios*, 161; O'Hara, *A Flock Divided,* 11; and Herrera, "Primary Education."

language ideologies and the process of secularization in tandem, this chapter illustrates that the two were deeply intertwined, in a way that belies the straightforward, unidirectional causality narrative that other studies have suggested. Secularization and language reform both emerged from the same reformist impulse to remake priests, parishioners, and the entire ecclesiastical apparatus. One did not create the other, although reformers' writings sometimes make it appear that way; rather, both are symptoms of the era's prevailing reformist tendencies.

In what follows, I argue that, in the wake of the mid-18th-century secularization reforms, mendicant language ideologies (ideologies linking the mendicants with native tongues) within the Church entered a state of flux, which dramatically altered the way friars utilized native languages in their interactions with the state. Much like the secular clergy's poor and undereducated clerics, by the 18th century, friars of the mendicant orders had become closely associated with indigenous languages in the minds of churchmen. When new secularization policies threatened these orders in 1749, the Franciscans, Dominicans and Augustinians responded by actively fostering and strengthening their link with native tongues. They believed that in doing so, they were tying themselves closer to a language ideology that served them well. Friars thought their expertise in native tongues indicated moral superiority, familiarity with the New World and its natives, and dedication to their calling—all qualities they thought reformers would admire and respect.

To some extent, the mendicants' strategy worked: thanks to their efforts, in 1755 language competency suddenly began to be a focal point of reformers' deliberations over

secularization. However, the result was not what the mendicants had hoped. By 1749, the governing bodies of Spain and New Spain were experiencing a major critical juncture in the form of new reforms inspired by new ideologies of governance. Consequently, the same language ideology friars had tried to take advantage of was in the midst of a dramatic transformation, at least among reformist royal and ecclesiastical authorities. Reformers like Archbishop Rubio y Salinas were beginning to see priests' proficiency in indigenous tongues as indicative of backwardness rather than dedication or New World expertise. As a result, the mendicants' strategy ultimately backfired. Learning from this misstep, after the late 1750s many friars sought to disassociate themselves with native languages, seeing their linguistic proficiency as no longer helpful to their cause.

Language ideology never experienced a complete transformation, however. After the late 1750s, some royal authorities still believed that good clerics had to be well-versed in the languages of their parishioners and worried about the consequences of employing priests who could not communicate directly with natives. As a result, a handful of friars continued to use their native language competency as a defense mechanism against secularization after the 1750s. Other mendicants—in particular, a Franciscan named Fray Francisco Antonio de la Rosa Figueroa—instead sought to mold new language ideologies that would suit the interests of the religious orders. Fray de la Rosa realized by the 1770s that if authorities fully implemented the new language reform laws, the mendicant orders and creole secular *lengua* clerics would face the same fate: complete obsolescence. Thus, he promoted the idea that native language competency reflected well on *all* priests, regular and secular alike, especially if they were creoles.

These debates over secularization demonstrate that, by frequently altering and updating their strategies for combating secularization, friars consistently negotiated and contested mendicant language ideologies, molding new ones or retaining old ones depending on their needs. Although friars hardly had the power to shape reformers' thoughts on language to their liking, they nevertheless participated in conversations about language competency in the Church. In doing so, they contributed to the process of forging new, contested language ideologies.

This chapter focuses solely on New Spain's three most powerful mendicant orders: the Franciscans, the Dominicans and the Augustinians. I have chosen to leave out the Jesuits, despite their reputation for working in native languages. This is because I was unable to find any Jesuit petitions against secularization, nor any evidence that they used their language competency as an argument against their 1767 expulsion from all of Spanish America. It is possible that the Jesuits did not depend upon their linguistic abilities for self-defense as the mendicants did due to the timing of their expulsion. The mendicants had to defend themselves much earlier than did the Jesuits, since the Crown's secularization orders of the late 1740s and 1750s affected the Jesuits only in a handful of marginal regions.[10] By the time Spain expelled the Jesuits in 1767, the Bourbon reforms had advanced significantly, and many mendicants had already ceased using the language argument in their petitions against secularization. Like these friars, the Jesuits might have thought that, in the political atmosphere of the late 1760s, their linguistic expertise would not garner them any favors with royal authorities.

[10] Brading, *Church and State*, 68.

I have organized this chapter chronologically, beginning in 1748 and ending in the 1770s. The chronological layout means I switch back and forth between different sides of the secularization debate—between friars and their defenders, on the one hand, and the royal and ecclesiastical authorities who promoted secularization, on the other. I have done this for the purpose of illustrating how language ideologies developed and changed over time, both growing out of debates over secularization and influencing those same debates in turn. Throughout the chapter, I have often described not only the language-related arguments that royal officials, prelates and friars used, but also their broader arguments against or in favor of secularization. This is for the purpose of illustrating that language ideologies were deeply integrated into each party's attitude towards secularization, and into their strategies for supporting or combating this policy. Although native tongues played no role at all in reformers' initial deliberations over secularization, these two seemingly disparate subjects would become inextricably linked in only a few years. This would have a decisive impact on the development of secularization and language ideology alike.

## THE *JUNTA*, 1748–1749

Secularization began with a small group of viceroys and prelates who supported clerical reform. In the mid-1740s, the viceroys of Mexico and Peru wrote to King Ferdinand VI, denouncing the excesses of the regular orders and requesting that friars be banned from parish work. On the advice of his confessor, the Jesuit Manuel de Rábago,

the king chose a relatively abnormal route for dealing with the issue: rather than putting the matter to the Council of the Indies, Ferdinand VI convened a *junta* to discuss the possibility of secularization. The *junta* included various ministers from the Council of the Indies, as well as the Archbishop of Lima, and the newly appointed Archbishop of Mexico, Manuel José Rubio y Salinas.[11] As Rodolfo Aguirre has observed, Rubio y Salinas's lack of experience in New Spain did not stop him from contributing vociferously to the debate.[12] The *junta* first met in November 1748 at the home of Joseph de Carvajal y Lancaster, the secretary of state and a member of the Council of the Indies. Their group's discussions would continue well into the 1750s; as these men developed new secularization policies, and as archbishops and viceroys implemented them, the *Junta* continually revisited the issue to reconsider their tactics and suggest alterations to royal orders.[13] The letters sent back and forth between *junta* members thus provide a helpful window into how and why secularization occurred in the mid-18th century.

During the *junta*'s discussions, the archbishops of both Lima and Mexico fought vigorously in favor of secularization. Apparently convinced by the viceroys' declarations against the mendicants, the two prelates sought to show the other committee members "the woeful state" of the regular clergy in both archdioceses, "the deplorable effects" this had caused, and "the enormous necessity for a remedy…" Referring to the regular orders as a "cancer," the archbishops complained that friars had too many convents and

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[11] Brading, "Tridentine Catholicism," 6-7 and AHAM, BC, Caja 104CL, Libro 3 (1748-1753). I will refer to the latter document hereafter as "Caja 104CL, Libro 3."
[12] Rodolfo Aguirre Salvador, "La secularización de doctrinas en el Arzobispado de México: realidades indianas y razones políticas, 1700-1749," *Hispania Sacra* 60:122 (2008)," 497.
[13] Caja 104CL, Libro 3.

denounced their "excesses and dissonant customs."[14] The king agreed, stating that the religious orders and their convents were so rich and opulent that, by comparison, the secular clergy's parish churches were "the most forgotten, and the most poor" in all of the New World. He lamented that the mendicant orders received all the financial benefits from fees for burials and pious works, thereby breaking their vows of poverty. Meanwhile, secular clergymen had nothing to sustain themselves, and their churches, with no funding to improve them, lacked "the appropriate decency and honor…"[15]

The suggestions the Ministers of the Indies contributed to the *junta*'s discussions are not available. However, it appears that the members of the *junta* generally agreed with prelates' contentions that the regular orders had overstepped their bounds, and that their power and opulence needed to be reined in. The *junta* members decided on three resolutions: reduce the number of the religious orders' convents; transfer *curato*s and *doctrinas* under friars' care over to secular priests; and reduce the mendicants' temporal goods (in other words, assets and other financial holdings). The next step was to determine how to best achieve these goals while limiting the risk of rebellion and ensuring that parishioners in New Spain and Peru were in good hands.[16]

Archbishop Rubio y Salinas was an ardent supporter of secularization as a means to improving the clergy. In 1749, once he had acquired a small amount of experience in New Spain, he gave the *junta* extensive advice on how to proceed against the regular orders. In addition to providing guidance on how to secularize in a legal fashion and

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[14] *Ibid*.
[15] *Ibid*.
[16] *Ibid*.

avoid conflict where possible, the prelate gave some of his reasons for seeking friars' removal from parish service. Doing so, he believed, would improve New Spain's parish administration overall, in large part because it would lead to a more ambitious and better-trained secular clergy. Removing friars from New Spain's parishes might encourage secular clerics to be more virtuous, work harder, and devote more time and energy to studying theology. He implied that, because so many parishes belonged to the regular orders, secular priests had few opportunities to acquire a benefice, or to acquire a better one than they already had. With such limited chances of promotion, clerics had little incentive to impress their superiors with their intellect, achievements with their parishioners, or good behavior. Thus, if the friars' *doctrinas* were passed on to secular clerics, New Spain's parishioners would be "better served, and the Indians better treated…"[17]

Suggestions from Rubio y Salinas and the other members of the *junta* quickly led to Ferdinand VI's first major secularization order, released on October 4, 1749. The new law ordered viceroys, governors and other officials to begin secularizing *doctrinas* in the viceroyalties of New Spain, Peru and Santa Fe. In accordance with one of Rubio y Salinas's suggestions, the order also stated that secular clerics were to take over only *doctrinas* that friars had left vacant: rather than allowing another friar to fill the spot, a secular priest was to take his place, thereby secularizing the parish. In this way, friars' overall removal would occur gradually, and with minimal strife—or so the monarch hoped. The 1749 law also specified that friars were to be replaced with secular clerics

[17] *Ibid*.

who were "suitable"—in other words, qualified. This requirement would prove significant a few years later, when royal and ecclesiastical officials began to debate exactly what "suitability" entailed, and whether the secular clergy was up to the task.[18] The mendicants' protests in the early 1750s would help to ensure that language competency (or lack thereof) became a cornerstone of "suitability" in authorities' later deliberations over secularization.

## EARLY PETITIONS, 1749–55

Unsurprisingly, friars in the Archbishopric of Mexico did not take the new secularization law lightly. Almost immediately after Ferdinand VI released the 1749 decree, New Spain's mendicants and their defenders fought back, petitioning the monarch to rescind the new policy. Their petitions drew upon friars' language competency extensively, using this to bolster their broader claim that the mendicants were morally superior and had more New World expertise than the secular clergy, and thus provided better spiritual guidance to New Spain's indigenous peoples.[19] Sometimes basing their claims upon native testimony, friars contended that the secularization law violated the rights of both friars and indigenous peoples, and would surely leave the latter in a state of spiritual ruin.

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[18] *Ibid*.

[19] Mendicants in the Archbishopric of Lima also used the language competency argument to defend themselves against secularization in the 18th century. Allan Kuethe and Kenneth Andrien, *The Spanish Atlantic World in the Eighteenth Century: War and the Bourbon Reforms, 1713-1796* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 180.

The mendicants' superior language skills comprised a critical argument against secularization from the earliest days after Ferdinand VI released the 1749 order. The Franciscans of the Santo Evangelio province were one of the first groups to protest secularization. Their 1749 petition to the king foreshadowed most of the early protests against secularization that were to come by focusing largely on indigenous peoples' spiritual wellbeing and friars' superior linguistic abilities. Appealing to the monarch's concern for "the administration of the sacraments, education and upbringing of the poor Indians," the Franciscans asserted that their order was responsible for the Church's (and thus, the Crown's) successes in New Spain.[20] They, not the diocesan clergy, had been the first to evangelize in the New World immediately after the Spanish arrived. They had accomplished the "such difficult task of coming [to the New World] among barbarians of such diverse nations," whose culture was "so unruly" that a central tenet of their devotional lives was "sacrificing human victims to their idols…" Franciscans had tamed not only these supposedly unruly natives, but also their "such diverse, difficult languages." While the conquistadores grew rich on New Spain's gold, silver and copal (a valuable tree resin), the selfless Franciscans had focused only on "enriching the Church with souls, and [the monarch] with vassals…"[21] The Santo Evangelio friars made it seem as if the colonial enterprise would have fallen apart completely if not for the difficult and altruistic work of their predecessors. The king had the Franciscans to thank for his vast empire and its religious successes.

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[20] BN, AF, Caja 127, exp. 1645, fs. 60r-67v (1749).
[21] *Ibid*.

The Santo Evangelio petition also expressed the Fransicans' concern that secular clerics would fail to provide indigenous peoples with the spiritual support they needed. They lamented that many secular priests were "so inept that they do not even know the basic rudiments of Christian doctrine…" The best clerics—the few who had a solid background in theology—generally preferred to hold more comfortable positions in universities or cathedrals than to do the hard labor of parish work. "And these," wrote the friars, "generally do not know the languages of the Indians, [which are] so necessary for being a *cura*…"[22] Even the secular priests who *did* do parish work were also generally too inept at native languages to serve their parishioners on their own. As a result, desperate *curas* often appealed to Franciscan convents for help, "since they are always stocked with individuals who are experts in the languages…"[23] Sometimes helping secular clerics turned into a full-time job. For instance, one friar had remained for a full two years in Tenango del Valle (in what is now the State of Mexico) to assist that parish's *cura*. The authors of the petition warned against the repercussions of ousting Franciscans from their convents. Given secular priests' inability to communicate with their parishioners, how would they manage without the much-needed assistance of their local friars?[24]

Mendicant friars continued to petition against secularization through the 1750s, almost always drawing on similar themes: their hard work in evangelizing the Americas since the 16th century; their concerns that indigenous peoples would suffer spiritual ruin

[22] *Ibid*.
[23] *Ibid*.
[24] *Ibid*.

once deprived of their friars; and the secular clergy's inability to speak the languages of their parishioners. Some friars protested in the form of lengthy treatises. For instance, Francisco Larrea, a Dominican, spent several months in 1751 and 1752 writing an 80-page treatise against the 1749 secularization policy. Larrea hoped that his treatise would encourage fellow friars to defend themselves, and would convince his royal and ecclesiastical superiors to reverse the reform. There is no evidence that he ever published his manuscript, so it may not have reached as many friars as he had hoped. Yet, if the inclusion of an angry decree from King Ferdinand VI in the manuscript's binding is any indication, the monarch or his royal ministers not only read the treatise, but also railed against it for its insolence.[25]

Francisco Larrea argued against the new policy on a primarily legal basis: he asserted that removing the regular clergy from their convents and parishes was against the law and violated friars' rights. His treatise drew on a vast corpus of legal and theological writings, including royal legal codes (such as the *Recopilación de las Leyes de Indias*), papal bulls, ecclesiastical law (the decrees of the Council of Trent, among others), widely used legal guides (like Juan de Hevia Bolaños's *Curia Philipica*), and the writings of theologians (such as the scholars of the School of Salamanca). Using these and an impressive array of other sources, Larrea asserted that law was the foundation of justice; and as purveyor of justice, the king was responsible for abiding by the law and

[25] AHAM, BC, Caja 48, Libro 2 (1751-1752), "Opusculos varios, de diversas materias, que han ocurrido en estos tiempos..."

ensuring that others did the same. Thus, once the monarch learned from friars like Larrea that the secularization policy was unlawful, it was his royal duty to rescind the order.[26]

Native language competency comprised a small yet significant portion of Larrea's argument. He contended that friars of the regular orders were uniquely suited to occupying benefices in the New World because they had taken the time to learn the necessary indigenous languages. "The King our Lord," he wrote, "has ordered in the *Recopilación de las leyes de Indias*, that the *curas doctrineros* must know the language of the Indians…"[27] Neglecting to learn the language of their parishioners was not only illegal; it also constituted a grave spiritual problem: "If the Pastor does not understand the language of his rational sheep, how will he feed them with the divine word, and how will he administer them the holy Sacraments, principally the Eucharist?"[28] The sacraments could not possibly be effective if participants could not understand one another. Thus, argued Larrea, the secularization policy was preventing pastors from "feeding" their flocks much-needed spiritual nourishment.

Like many other petitions against secularization, Larrea's treatise posited that secular priests rarely had the appropriate language training, much to the spiritual detriment of their parishioners. He noted that in the parish of Atlatlahucan (Morelos), where Augustinians had served until recently, the new secular priest did not know Nahuatl, which his parishioners spoke. "It is widely known," Larrea said, "that the priest confesses them by way of a lay interpreter or Nahuatl speaker…" He thought this an

[26] *Ibid*.
[27] *Ibid*.
[28] *Ibid*.

extremely dubious practice, given that "only in very extraordinary cases of death is confession by interpreter permitted…"[29] By relying on interpreters rather than learning native languages themselves, diocesan priests were neglecting their duties as clergymen and consequently putting their indigenous parishioners at risk of spiritual ruin.

Larrea suggested that secular priests' linguistic deficiencies signaled not only their failure to comply with the basic requirements of their profession, but also their moral failings. He noted an anecdote from Montenegro's *Itinerario*, a common guidebook for parish priests discussed in the previous chapter. Montenegro, Larrea said, had written of "a certain secular priest, [who] after many years of service, did not know any more of the language of his parishioners than 'xicualica tomin [bring me money], hens and eggs."[30] Mixing Spanish with Nahuatl and translating only "bring me money" into the latter tongue, Larrea simultaneously chided secular priests' for their inability to speak with their parishioners and implied that they were morally corrupt, bothering to learn only enough of the language to demand payment from indigenous peoples. He argued that returning the religious clergy to their parishes was the only way to ensure compliance with the law in the *Recopilación*, and to ensure the spiritual and financial wellbeing of New Spain's natives. By referring to friars' superior language skills—and the secular clergy's lack thereof—Larrea suggested that royal and ecclesiastical authorities had both a legal and a moral obligation to return New Spain's *doctrinas* to the

[29] *Ibid*.
[30] *Ibid*.

mendicants. In his mind, the souls of millions of indigenous peoples were at risk, all because the parish clergy was morally and linguistically inept.

In 1753, Ferdinand VI issued a new *cédula* with updated instructions regarding secularization. Given that the 1749 orders had apparently been successful in the archbishoprics of Mexico, Lima and Santa Fe, the king used this new law to extend his secularization policy to every diocese in the Americas. Much like the 1749 order, friars greeted the 1753 law with extensive protests. For example, shortly after Ferdinand VI issued the 1753 order, the generals of the three mendicant orders—Franciscan, Dominican and Augustinian—complained to the Crown.[31] Much like their fellow friars' earlier petitions against secularization, the three generals argued that the new policy would prove disastrous not only for themselves, but also for indigenous peoples. Once again, their argument relied in part on the oft-repeated assertion that secular clerics rarely knew the languages spoken by their native parishioners, and left them spiritually neglected as a result.[32]

Many who fought against secularization relied upon indigenous testimony to make their case for the mendicants' moral and linguistic superiority. One such individual was Juan Baptista de Balde, Guardian of the Convent of Santa María de Ozumba, located in what is now the State of Mexico. In August 1753, Baptista solicited testimony from the indigenous residents of the aforementioned nearby *pueblo* of Atlatlahucan (Morelos) regarding the recent secularization of their parish. Apparently hoping to use this

[31] Brading, "Tridentine Catholicism," 7.
[32] *Ibid*., 7-8.

testimony to convince royal officials that secular clerics were too inept to serve as parish priests, he asked the Atlatlahucan natives a number of questions about how their lives had changed since their Augustinian friars had been removed in 1745.[33]

Many of Baptista's questions—and thus, much of the natives' testimony—related to the language competency of the secular priests entrusted with their care. One-third of the nine questions Baptista posed to his indigenous witnesses related to their cleric's ability to speak Nahuatl, the language most commonly spoken in Atlatlahucan. He asked if the Augustinians who had previously served their community had administered the sacraments punctually in the appropriate language; if Atlatlahucan's new secular clerics knew Nahuatl; and if these new priests had had to rely on interpreters to conduct confession and last rites. Baptista's goal was to demonstrate that Atlatlahucan's secular priests were mistreating native parishioners' spiritual and temporal lives alike. Many of his other questions related to matters of mistreatment; for instance, he asked if the clerics had been overcharging parishioners, and whether the new *cura* spent most of his time away from the parish.[34] Like many other friars, Baptista saw language competency as a critical component of a priest's job that was essential to his ability to treat parishioners properly. He sought to show that Augustinians provided natives with unparalleled spiritual guidance, while secular clerics abused their authority and did not bother to learn to communicate with their parishioners.

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[33] BN, AF, Caja 107, exp. 1470, fs. 20-49 (1753). Referred to hereafter as "Caja 107, exp. 1470."
[34] *Ibid*.

Although their testimony varied slightly from person to person, the 13 Atlatlahucan residents Baptista interviewed all agreed that their new *cura* could not speak the local language (Nahuatl), and generally did not fulfill his duties as expected, resulting in "many absences of spiritual nourishment."[35] Although the testimony was recorded in Spanish, the documentation states that witnesses spoke in Nahuatl, via an interpreter. One witness reported that the new priest "has barely learned a few Nahuatl terms…" They all agreed that he had initially been conducting last rites by simply reading his lines in Nahuatl from a manual, apparently with no understanding of what dying parishioners were telling him.[36] After a while, the new parish priest had hired an interpreter named Señor Flores to help him. Even though Señor Flores was a native who was sufficiently skilled in Nahuatl and Spanish, he was nevertheless only a student, and apparently had not been ordained as a priest. The witnesses listed some of their fellow community members who had had to confess by way of the interpreter, and thus had died without proper last rites. All reported that their community had not had such problems before the Crown secularized their parish. Their Augustinian friars "had administered the sacraments with complete reliability," always in Nahuatl.[37] They had never had to confess by way of interpreter under the Augustinians, and certainly not one as underqualified as Señor Flores.

The Atlatlahucan witnesses indicated that their new secular priest had been neglecting them in other ways, as well. In addition to overcharging them for various

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[35] *Ibid*.
[36] *Ibid*.
[37] *Ibid*.

religious services, he spent far too little time in their parish, sometimes even failing to appear for Mass on Sundays. As a result of his frequent absences, numerous parishioners had died without confessing. In an effort to mitigate their desperate circumstances, some Augustinians from nearby Totolapan had sometimes come to Atlatlahucan to say Mass, and, until their prelate had called them away for other assignments, some Franciscans had helped to administer the parish without compensation. Witnesses testified that they had never suffered such circumstances when their *doctrina* had been entrusted to the Augustinians. The friars had "looked upon them as they would children… with much charity, according to custom…" Their current secular priest, on the other hand, "does the opposite…"[38] Their secular cleric's inability to speak their language was just one example of his many failings as a priest—one of many manifestations of his cruelty and neglect. The witnesses made clear that they saw their previous Augustinian caretakers as infinitely preferable to this underqualified and morally inept secular priest, due in part to their language skills.

Much like the religious orders and their indigenous witnesses, friars' allies often drew upon these priests' reputation for linguistic superiority in order to prove their unique suitability for parish work. For instance, in a 1753 petition to Ferdinand VI, Mexico City's *Ayuntamiento* (city council) portrayed the mendicants as the only viable candidates for maintaining New Spain's spiritual life. The council members contended that friars were highly obedient, morally superior, and better suited than secular clerics to parish service. Significantly, the Ayuntamiento's petition argued not only against

[38] *Ibid*.

secularization, but also against Hispanization. As I explain in Chapter Three, by the early 1750s the Hispanization reforms had only just begun. However, the city council evidently recognized that, if friars' claim to linguistic superiority was going to work in their favor, they would need to put a stop to these early language reform efforts.

Echoing many mendicant petitions of the late 1740s and early 1750s, the Ayuntamiento asserted that clerics rarely knew the languages of their parishioners—and certainly did not know them well enough to conduct the sacraments properly. According to the Ayuntamiento, too few clerics were ordained *a título de idioma*, and "he who knows [a language] with perfection is unique…"[39] Moreover, secular priests usually learned native languages in classrooms in major urban areas, rather than in pueblos where they could hear local native speakers use the language on a regular basis. As a result, even if they had learned a native tongue, they often had trouble using it for their parish work because of the way language use varied from *pueblo* to *pueblo*; the Nahuatl (or Otomi or Mazahua) they had learned in school might sound very different from the variant their parishioners used in their confessions. As the Ayuntamiento put it, "many parishes are provided with secular priests who have not greeted the language of their parishioners…"[40]

In contrast to secular priests' limited linguistic skills, friars of the regular orders made a significant effort to ensure they could communicate properly with their parishioners. According to the city council, secular clerics normally learned only enough

[39] BN, AF, Caja 127, exp. 1646, fs. 7r-14v. Referred to hereafter as "Caja 127, exp. 1646."
[40] *Ibid*.

of a native language to pass an exam, and they were rarely familiar enough with it to put it to use on a daily basis. Friars, on the other hand, learned native tongues in the *pueblos*, where they could practice with native speakers. Thus, they learned not only the grammatical structures of native languages (*la lengua teórica*), but also how natives used it every day. The Ayuntamiento attributed this different language learning method in part to friars' dedication: "they learn [native languages] with love," wrote the city council, "and they emerge every bit as experts."[41] Thus, the mendicants' linguistic abilities meant not only that they were more qualified for their jobs than were secular clerics, but also that they were more devoted to their calling.

The Ayuntamiento members argued that friars' willingness to learn native languages—and to learn them well—also signaled their superior obedience to royal and ecclesiastical law. They noted that "so many royal orders and laws" required priests to know the languages of their parishioners. The legal expert Solórzano, for instance, wrote that "we are deaf to tongues we do not know…"[42] Thus, according to the council members, priests who neglected to learn their parishioners' languages properly were in direct violation of the law. The fact that friars followed these laws to the letter indicated their obedience and dedication to the Crown, and, thus, their suitability as pastors for New Spain's indigenous peoples.

The city council also suggested that friars were more obedient than secular clerics because prelates of the regular orders always ensured that their priests followed the law.

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[41] *Ibid*.
[42] *Ibid*.

Whereas the prelates of the religious orders insisted that their friars learned the languages of their parishioners, the bishops and archbishops entrusted with the secular clergy could rarely say the same. This was in part because secular prelates had little knowledge of their territory, or of the state of the parishes under their care. According to the Ayuntamiento's petition, the prelates of the religious orders conducted *visitas* (pastoral visits) of every one of their *doctrinas* annually. Bishops and archbishops, on the other hand, only tended to conduct a single visit during their entire lifetime.[43] Clearly, the council argued, secular prelates could not possibly ensure their priests' compliance with regulations if they had little knowledge of their parishes or what occurred within them. Moreover, this lack of knowledge meant it was unlikely that secular prelates could ensure their clerics knew the languages of their parishioners or how to communicate with them effectively.

The Ayuntamiento contended that it was necessary for prelates to ensure that their clergy was well-trained in natives' many languages, because spreading Spanish throughout the archbishopric would never work. Hispanization orders had been unsuccessful ever since the Spanish Conquest, in large because of indigenous peoples' "inclination… to their own language."[44] Moreover, native parishioners who did know Spanish were highly unlikely to use it with their priests, because (for apparently unknown reasons) indigenous peoples considered it imprudent to speak it to superiors or to fellow natives. Thus, they would only confess in their own languages. Instead of spreading

[43] *Ibid*.
[44] *Ibid*.

Spanish, then, it would be better for indigenous peoples' spiritual wellbeing if clergymen learned the appropriate languages.

The city council's focus on the clergy's language competency was part of their strategy to portray the mendicants as experts on the New World and its indigenous peoples. The Ayuntamiento members argued that it was essential to make sure natives understood the tenets of the faith properly *before* attempting to teach them Spanish. Secular priests had trouble with this in part because there were too few of them per parish, and because they knew too little about natives; their knowledge of indigenous thought was too limited for them to ensure that native parishioners had a thorough understanding of the faith. Friars, on the other hand, knew their parishioners well and could easily spot and correct any signs of unorthodoxy.[45] The mendicants' unique expertise was thus essential to indigenous peoples' spiritual wellbeing.

It was perhaps for this reason that indigenous parishioners tended to like friars better than secular priests—according to the Ayuntamiento, at least.[46] The council members noted that "parishioners, especially Indians, listen better to the teachings and Evangelical Word from the friars…"; this was because they saw friars with such "love and reverence" that, "every time an Indian sees a *religioso*, he kisses [the friar's] hand,"

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[45] *Ibid*.

[46] In reality, some indigenous parishioners probably loved their friars, while others did not. As I demonstrate in this chapter, and as William Taylor has shown previously, some native communities responded to secularization by writing or providing testimony for petitions in defense of the mendicants. However, as Christoph Rosenmüller has argued, many native communities quietly supported secularization; rather than indigenous peoples, the mendicants' most significant allies were in fact local elites. Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred*, 86 and Rosenmüller, "The Indians... Long for Change," 159.

even if the native lived in a secular parish.[47] Few would ever have the same reaction to a secular priest, even if he was their own, local cleric. The Ayuntamiento attributed this in part to the fact that the regular orders had been the first priests to interact with indigenous peoples in the 16th century; thus, natives had a special and longstanding connection to friars that they simply did not have with the secular clergy. According to the city council, the mendicants' extensive experience with indigenous peoples, linguistic abilities, and obedience to the law made them the ideal priests for New Spain's parishes, and thus their *doctrinas* should be returned to them. Despite numerous royal orders in favor of Hispanization, indigenous peoples had retained their languages; thus, they would need linguistically skilled friars to serve them.[48]

Like the Ayuntamiento, one friar in the early 1750s recognized that if he was to defend the regular orders successfully, he would also need to defend the use of indigenous languages in ecclesiastical administration. Fray Francisco Antonio de la Rosa Figueroa, an elderly Franciscan friar and archivist of the Province of Santo Evangelio, wrote a letter to the Duke of Arcos in 1753 defending not only the mendicant orders, but also the utility of native languages for instructing indigenous parishioners.[49] In his mind, secularization and Hispanization were almost inextricably linked. Like many other petitions of the era, Fray de la Rosa's 1753 letter argued that only the mendicants had the necessary language skills to administer New Spain's parishes. He asserted that the secular

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[47] Caja 127, exp. 1646.

[48] It is unclear whether the Ayuntamiento's petition ever reached the monarch. The cover sheet of one copy of their letter states that "it is highly doubtful that [this report] was placed in the hands of his majesty." *Ibid*.

[49] De la Rosa's letter to the Duke of Arcos is included in the manuscript of "Vindicias de la verdad," Bancroft MSS M-M 101 (1773-1774).

clerics whom Archbishop Rubio y Salinas had appointed to replace friars in various *doctrinas* did not have the language skills to fulfill parishioners' needs on their own. "I doubt very much," he wrote, "that any one [of these secular clerics] could, in my presence, explain in the Nahuatl language a dogmatic and catechetical point, and on the spot formulate a continuous sermon lasting at least a quarter of an hour…" He also doubted that they could conduct confession or any of the other sacraments "with appropriate terms in a language so delicate, that a varied accent or letter speaks a heresy or conceives an error…"[50] As a result of the secular clergy's linguistic incompetence, many secular clerics had had to ask friars to serve as their assistants so they could minister to native-speaking parishioners.[51] De la Rosa predicted that this situation would only get worse now that Archbishop Rubio y Salinas had announced that he would no longer ordain clerics *a título de idioma*—a policy discussed in Chapter Three. The secular clergy could not possibly fulfill indigenous peoples' spiritual needs if they could not even communicate with them.[52]

De la Rosa contended that New Spain's natives would always need friars and their linguistic expertise, because Hispanization was a bad idea that could only end in disaster. He worried that teaching indigenous peoples Spanish would lead them to become rebellious, thereby jeopardizing New Spain's tranquility and order. He asserted that this was already a problem in populous urban areas like Mexico City, where many indigenous peoples already knew some Spanish. De la Rosa was convinced that this was

[50] *Ibid*., f. 4.
[51] *Ibid*., fs. 3-4.
[52] *Ibid*., fs. 4-5.

the cause behind many indigenous rebellions, including the 1692 revolt in the capital. He argued that, "this unrest and these riots originate in cities because there, the Indians are so *ladinos* in Spanish, communicating with the rabble…"[53] If indigenous peoples beyond major cities spoke Spanish as well, these rebellions would spread to other parts of the archbishopric. De la Rosa invoked his substantial experience working with New Spain's natives to support his argument: having resided in numerous towns in four different bishoprics, he knew that "where there is no communication in the Spanish language with the Indians, the *pueblos* live in tranquility."[54] The more Spanish natives knew, the more likely they would be to rebel.

De la Rosa feared that secularization and the ensuing spread of Spanish would lead indigenous peoples into not only rebellion, but also idolatry and various other sins. Indeed, the friar was hardly optimistic about indigenous peoples' capacity to act like good Christians on their own. He argued that indigenous peoples were naturally inclined to commit "idolatry, sorcery, diabolical pacts, and drunkenness…" Even with the presence of the friars, "there are so many schools of the Devil in the pueblos, mountains, and hidden caves, where they adore idols…"[55] Without the mendicants—and, thus, without spiritual guidance in a familiar language—natives would be even more

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[53] *Ibid*., f. 12.

[54] *Ibid*. De la Rosa thought that letting indigenous peoples learn Spanish would lead to the same problems with rebellion and unrest that plagued the British and French colonies. He described the natives of British and French colonies like New Orleans, Canada and Bermuda as "barbarous Indians," and believed that substantial ethnic mixing between individuals of English, French and indigenous origin meant that natives of those areas were often relatively fluent in English or French. According to de la Rosa, the easy communication between indigenous peoples and Europeans had allowed alliances between natives and others that had led to rebellion. On the other hand, he thought, since New Spain's indigenous peoples were kept linguistically separated from Spaniards, rebellious ideas could not so easily make their way to indigenous communities. *Ibid*., fs. 12-13.

[55] *Ibid*., f. 15.

susceptible to sin. Thus, secularization would lead to an increase in all the aforementioned vices, as well as "incest, rape, fights, injuries and deaths."[56] De la Rosa also argued that, due to indigenous peoples' "natural timidness," they were unlikely to confess fully in the presence of an interpreter. Consequently, de la Rosa warned the Duque de Arcos of the "extremely horrible consequences and harm to millions of souls" that would result from depriving them of access to priests who spoke their own languages.[57] According to De la Rosa, if secularization was implemented, Spanish would spread far enough to cause rebellion, but not far enough that monolingual secular priests could communicate with all of their parishioners and prevent them from sinning. The combined result of Hispanization and secularization would be disastrous for New Spain's indigenous peoples. Only multilingual friars could save New Spain from rebellion and sin.

By the mid-1750s, the clergy's language competency had become a key component of the debate over secularization, thanks to mendicants' efforts to combat the policy. In their numerous petitions and treatises against secularization, friars and their allies had argued time and time again—sometimes with the help of indigenous witnesses—that the secular clergy lacked the necessary language skills to take over for the mendicants in New Spain's *doctrinas*. In hopes of demonstrating their superior dedication, morality and ability to serve indigenous peoples, friars sought to link themselves with native languages and the secular clergy with Spanish monolingualism.

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[56] *Ibid*., f. 3.
[57] *Ibid*., fs. 5-6.

To a significant extent, they succeeded. Unfortunately for the mendicants, however, the language ideology that formed the basis of their strategy was itself in the process of transforming. Some key reformist officials would not see their language competency as signs of morality, dedication or skill, but as indications of backwardness—proof that the mendicants were antithetical to reformist goals. The language ideology friars had counted on for their defense against secularization would instead work to their detriment as of 1755.

## THE *JUNTA*, 1755-6: LANGUAGE ENTERS THE DEBATE

Mendicant petitions would have a marked effect upon debates over secularization—but not in the way friars had hoped. Before 1755, the clergy's language competency had not factored into royal and ecclesiastical authorities' deliberations over secularization. But friars' petitions appear to have concerned Ferdinand VI, whose investment in the wellbeing of New Spain's indigenous peoples was notorious. The mendicants' claims that the secular clergy's linguistic incompetency would adversely affect natives seems to have struck a nerve with the monarch, who in 1755 wrote to New Spain's viceroy, the Marquis de Amarillas, stating what he saw as a major problem with secularization: there were not enough secular clerics competent in the appropriate native languages. The king lamented that "The flock cannot understand well the voice of their own pastor unless they understand his language…"[58] Despite numerous royal orders to

[58] Caja 104CL, Libro 3.

teach indigenous peoples Spanish, this still had not occurred, and most native communities still had no *maestros* to teach them Spanish. The monarch also thought it unlikely that many more secular clerics would learn native languages, since they had little incentive to do so. Thus, Ferdinand VI feared that secularization would leave many indigenous parishioners without access to a priest they could understand.[59] The clergy's native language competency had suddenly become central to determining whether full secularization was feasible and desirable.

The monarch thought secularization might still be possible, so long as officials took steps to ensure that enough secular clerics learned native languages. With this in mind, he made three requests. First, the king said that the university in Mexico City should require all theology students to learn Nahuatl in order to earn their degrees. Second, he recommended that the university hire professors who could teach and research other native languages that needed further study. It was profoundly difficult to write grammatical manuals for languages like that spoken by the "Serrano Otomi Indians," he said, since in such tongues "one word can mean many things, depending on the difference in accents…"[60] The monarch hoped that the university could help overcome such obstacles if it employed experts in these languages. The king's third suggestion was to form a *junta* made up of "important persons" as well as the university's rector and other administrators; together, they would determine how best to ensure that

[59] *Ibid*.
[60] *Ibid*.

New Spain's natives learned Spanish.[61] Where the new language requirements for theology degrees and new professors and grammars served as a short-term solution, the *junta* was the key in the long run. Natives would need to learn Spanish eventually; in the meantime, however, they would need to have priests who could teach doctrine and provide confession in their own languages.

When Archbishop Rubio y Salinas replied to the king, the issue of priests' language competency quickly became a full-fledged debate that linked Hispanization closely with secularization. The prelate disagreed vehemently with the Ferdinand VI's plan to increase the number of *lengua* priests, as he explained in his lengthy response to the king in April 1756. Challenging the monarch's claims regarding the shortage of linguistically skilled priests, the prelate argued that New Spain had plenty of secular clerics who knew native languages, and that very few vacant benefices required a *lengua* priest anyway. In fact, he thought the Archbishopric of Mexico suffered from an acute oversupply of *lengua* priests. Rubio y Salinas complained that his predecessors had ordained too many men *a título de idioma* in past years. As a result, most of them now milled about the capital, jobless. In an attempt to remedy the problem, he had ceased ordaining priests by right of their language skills. The archbishop had also had to assign many of the capital's unemployed *lengua* priests to small tasks, such as providing confession to natives in hospitals and prisons.[62] The last thing Rubio y Salinas thought

[61] *Ibid*.
[62] *Ibid*.

his diocese needed was more *lengua* priests; thus, he saw the king's concerns as highly misguided.

Rubio y Salinas wanted to reduce the quantity of *lengua* priests in the archbishopric in part because he saw these men as poor and undereducated, a language ideology I explored in Chapter One. He worried that the king's proposed Nahuatl requirement for theology degrees would muddle the deep intellectual divisions between lowly *lengua* priests and well-trained theology scholars. He contended that students who took theology at the university had no need to know Nahuatl because they were destined to be intellectuals, not humble *lengua* ministers. Rubio y Salinas feared that adding a language requirement to the theology program might deter more scholarly individuals—especially Europeans and other individuals from outside the diocese—from studying at the university, since they had no need for such skills.[63] According to the archbishop, native languages were the purview of the lowliest ministers, not of honorable academics. Moreover, there were already so many of these humble *lengua* priests that few ever fared well in their careers; Rubio y Salinas contended that most of them had difficulty supporting their "poor and destitute families," because they could rarely find work for

[63] *Ibid*. The archbishop disagreed with the idea of hiring more language professors for the university in part because he thought *lengua* priests did not learn native languages in school; instead, they had learned them while growing up in the heavily indigenous countryside. Rubio y Salinas claimed that had already hired a new professor of Nahuatl at the university, and that this professor's efforts had resulted in a slew of new priests who knew the language well and used it as part of their profession. However, he also asserted that none of the priests recently granted *lengua* benefices had taken the Nahuatl or Otomi courses at the university. He claimed that some *lengua* clerics were indigenous peoples, while others were Spaniards who had grown up in remote parts of the viceroyalty, and thus had spoken a native language from infancy. These Spaniards had apparently learned these languages so well in their *pueblos* and *haciendas* and from their indigenous wet nurses that they could speak them with nearly the same accent and proficiency as native speakers.

decent pay.[64] Whereas Ferdinand VI argued that New Spain needed more *lengua* priests to fill the void left behind by the mendicants, Rubio y Salinas thought this would only strengthen the clerical proletariat, with no benefit for either the priesthood or the archbishopric's parishes.

The archbishop disagreed with the king's plan in part because he saw native languages as the purview of the mendicants—a negative attribute in Rubio y Salinas's eyes. The prelate argued that Spanish had failed to spread among New Spain's indigenous peoples in large part because the mendicants had prevented it. He contended that if natives had learned Spanish from the time of the Conquest, they would be more integrated with Spaniards, with productive results. Yet ever since the 16th century, the religious orders had purposely and self-interestedly prevented natives from learning Spanish because they knew that, "at the moment in which [their *doctrinas*] could be administered spiritually in Spanish, the need for [friars] would cease," since monolingual secular clerics could then easily serve parishioners on their own.[65] The prelate also noted that friars of the religious orders had always refrained from asking prelates to declare their *doctrinas* as Spanish-speaking. The archbishop lamented that friars had neglected to do this even for their Mexico City *doctrinas*, where residents clearly knew Spanish.[66] For multiple centuries, the mendicants had prevented Hispanization solely out of greed.

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[64] Rubio y Salinas thought that priests who spoke native languages other than Nahuatl had particular difficulty making a living. *Ibid*.
[65] *Ibid*.
[66] *Ibid*.

Rubio y Salinas contended that by discouraging the spread of Spanish, the regular orders had intentionally sought to inhibit indigenous peoples' progress.[67] The archbishop asserted that the religious orders had conspired with *encomenderos* in the 16th century—and *alcaldes mayores* more recently—to maintain indigenous peoples' linguistic ignorance so they would be forever "innocent victims," unable to communicate their grievances to their superiors. According to the prelate, this was "the true reason… that the *Indios* have maintained their simplicity and dejection…"[68] In addition to inhibiting natives from intermingling with (and therefore, learning from) Spaniards, he believed they never learned Christian doctrine properly in their own languages. Rubio y Salinas complained that, in many places, indigenous parishioners "only knew doctrine like parrots"; in other words, they could repeat lines of doctrine on command, but had no understanding of what they were saying.[69] In the eyes of prelates, indigenous peoples' monolingualism was holding them back. Lacking any real comprehension of Christianity, isolated from Spaniards, and unable to air their grievances to their superiors, they could not possibly achieve on the same level as their Spanish and *mestizo* counterparts. By

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[67] Rubio y Salinas thought languages other than Nahuatl were particularly conducive to backwardness among indigenous peoples. In his mind, these tongues were the impure and imprecise communicative tools of New Spain's lowliest people. The archbishop dismissed languages like Totonac and Huastecan as "dialects," that had a much more "crude" pronunciation than Nahuatl or Spanish. He believed that Otomi, Tepehua and Mazahua had limited vocabularies, and thought their native speakers were the viceroyalty's "most uncouth" ("más rústicos"). He saw them as rural hillbilly types who had been "brutal" and uncivilized since their earliest days: their ancestors "did not practice the arts or sciences, nor did they have laws, histories, or books in which to place their language…" He also thought native speakers of these languages were bad at Spanish. The prelate believed it was next to impossible to learn languages like Otomi, Tepehua and Mazahua by way of a grammar manual. He argued that this was because tiny differences in inflection or accompanying hand gestures could mean vastly different things from village to village; thus, the only real way for Spaniards to learn them was to be forced to communicate with native speakers in daily life, rather than to study a "defective" grammar book. *Ibid*.

[68] *Ibid*.

[69] *Ibid*.

selfishly refusing to use the Spanish language, the religious orders and their allies had let down New Spain's entire native population.

Indeed, Rubio y Salinas argued that that learning Spanish was essential to not only indigenous peoples' religious development, but also their intellectual and cultural progress. He believed that once natives had learned Spanish, they would "become interested in reading and writing, with a desire to learn the sciences and liberal arts…" This, in turn, would allow them to "ennobl[e] their spirits, and emerg[e] from the poverty, nakedness, and misery in which they live"—a poverty and misery so extreme that "there is no equal example in history…" As evidence, the archbishop referred to the example of the natives of Mexico City and Tlaxcala: "they speak Spanish, use cloaks, adorn and live in houses…" They were also "much less humble than the rest of their nation," exhibiting more rationality and more shame in the face of vice. These natives also knew how to defend themselves from injustice, "appealing to their superiors for a remedy for their grievances…" Overall, thought the archbishop, the Spanish-speaking natives of Tlaxcala and Mexico City "behave, at least externally, with more composure, devotion, and respect" in all matters of religion.[70] He hoped that if all New Spain's indigenous peoples were to learn Spanish, they too could live like the natives of Tlaxcala and Mexico City: acculturated to Spanish norms and intellectually improved.

Yet this new and improved indigenous population would continue to be unattainable if priests—especially friars—continued to speak indigenous languages. Rubio y Salinas argued that most natives had neglected to learn Spanish simply because

[70] *Ibid*.

they did not have to: they could easily conduct every single moment of their day-to-day lives entirely in Nahuatl, since this had become a lingua franca even among many Spaniards.[71] Despite his distaste for the language, Rubio y Salinas claimed that even he himself had learned some Nahuatl, including some words that did not exist in Spanish. With this statement, the prelate insinuated that Nahuatl was so predominant that *its* unique terms—not those of Spanish—had become essential vocabulary for New Spain's everyday life. Because indigenous languages (especially Nahuatl) were so prevalent, and because natives generally insisted on confessing in their own languages, Rubio y Salinas believed it would take more than laws and schools to convince natives to speak Spanish. Indeed, they would need to be exposed to the language on a regular basis, and forced to use it in their everyday interactions.[72] Thus, the prelate argued it was time for priests to cease speaking native tongues to their parishioners. The solution to the secularization crisis was not to train more *lengua* priests, as the king had suggested, but to let native languages fade from ecclesiastical administration.

Rubio y Salinas connected secularization with Hispanization not only in theory, but also in policy.[73] The archbishop prohibited friars from preaching in languages other than Spanish—not only in central urban areas like Mexico City, but also in more remote regions where most parishioners were monolingual. Yet, the form of Hispanization he promoted was gradual, not sudden. He claimed that he had prohibited only some clerics

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[71] *Ibid*.
[72] *Ibid*.
[73] Rubio y Salinas seems to have had some encouragement from Viceroy Revillagigedo regarding Hispanization; the prelate noted that the viceroy had ordered him to give newly secularized *doctrinas* to clerics who only knew Spanish. *Ibid*.

in the archbishopric's secularized parishes from using native languages to communicate with parishioners. In fact, he allowed approximately half of the priests to continue using native tongues to ease the transition to Spanish.[74] If New Spain's ecclesiastical administration was to become monolingual, the change would need to occur gradually.

By 1755-1756, the clergy's language competency and Hispanization had become closely linked with secularization. Indeed, Rubio y Salinas made his extensive aforementioned comments regarding indigenous languages as part of a debate over secularization; he and Ferdinand VI saw Hispanization as directly relevant to the matter at hand. The friars who had fought hard to ensure that royal and ecclesiastical authorities saw the mendicants as the ultimate experts in indigenous languages had succeeded. The language ideology they had fostered did not have the intended result, however. Ferdinand VI does appear to have had second thoughts about secularization after hearing friars' protests, although he also thought some adjustments to the secular clergy might make the reform possible. To Rubio y Salinas, on the other hand, the mendicants' link with native languages only reinforced his perception that both were distasteful and backward-thinking.

Ferdinand VI modified his secularization policy yet again in 1757, with a new decree that was somewhat gentler than its predecessors in 1749 and 1753. The new law

[74] Rubio y Salinas advocated a gradual approach to Hispanization in part to ensure that clerics who had worked hard in very "difficult" parishes ("partidos muy penosos") would not go unrewarded. As I demonstrate in Chapters One and Four, clerics who spoke native tongues—who also tended to be relatively poor and undereducated—were generally likely to land the archbishopric's remotest and least desirable benefices. The prelate appears to have been concerned that, if he insisted on choosing only monolingual priests for newly secularized parishes, the *lengua* priests who had toiled for years under difficult circumstances would never be eligible for any of these benefices—and, thus, would have far fewer options for advancement than other priests. *Ibid*.

permitted friars to remain in their current parishes until they died or willfully resigned. In addition, each province was allowed to retain two of its wealthiest parishes; they could take back or retain any convent housing at least eight friars; and the Church had to return their embargoed property, plus various other modifications of previous orders.[75] Although the new law did not mention any new language policy, the discussions preceding it made clear that Hispanization and secularization had become almost one and the same in the minds of reformers. This change would have a marked effect upon the mendicants' future interactions with the state.

## STRATEGIES AND IDEOLOGIES, NEW AND OLD: LATER PETITIONS AGAINST SECULARIZATION, 1757-1800

As reformers' debates over secularization evolved, so too did some mendicants' strategies for combating the policy. As the deliberations between Ferdinand VI and Rubio y Salinas demonstrate, the mendicants' linguistic defense had not had the intended effect. Thus, after 1757, the mendicants became much less likely to lean on their linguistic expertise as a defense mechanism against secularization. Many petitions after that time did not mention friars' language skills, or mentioned them only in passing. While nearly every petition I found from the mid-1750s or earlier focused substantially on friars' superior linguistic abilities, those from the late 1750s onward mostly shifted to other arguments against secularization. For instance, in a 1761 petitions by Augustinian friars asking to retain a convent near Zitácuaro, Michoacán, friars' language skills hardly came

[75] Brading, "Tridentine Catholicism," 8 and Caja 104CL, Libro 3.

up at all. Nor did the matter of language appear in Franciscans' 1763 plea for the return of some *doctrinas* near Jalisco, Guadalajara; nor did it in a 1780 petition from Franciscans at the Colegio de Pachuca.[76] By the 1760s, the mendicants had presumably realized that many royal and ecclesiastical authorities had become critical of the role of native languages in ecclesiastical administration. Some friars altered their strategies accordingly.

Other mendicants chose to stick with their old tactic of invoking their language skills in their petitions. For instance, sometime in the 1750s, the Santo Evangelio Franciscans would petition the Crown once again, complaining that various problems resulting from secularization—including the linguistically inept secular clergy—had left their province in a "calamitous state."[77] Then, in a 1766 letter to the viceroy, the *Comisario General* of New Spain's Franciscans highlighted the fact that his friars were experts at indigenous languages, while their secular counterparts were not.[78] Even as late as the 1790s, the Dominicans of San Hipólito Mártir province in Oaxaca asked the king to return some of their *doctrinas*, basing their request in large part on the secular clergy's inability to speak the local languages.[79] Multiple mendicant orders sometimes even worked together on petitions, claiming that their combined language skills and ability to work with the "savage Indians" made them essential to New Spain's religious life.[80]

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[76] AGI, México 2720 (Zitácuaro, 1761); AGN, CRS Vol. 119, exp. 3 (Jalisco, 1763); and AGN, CRS Vol. 40, exp. 4 (Pachuca, 1780).
[77] BN, AF Caja 128, exp. 1650, fs. 9r-14v.
[78] BN, AF Caja 127, exp. 1648, fs. 1r-14v & 44r-56v.
[79] AGN, RCO Vol. 149, exps. 178-179.
[80] BN, AF Caja 128, exp. 1650, fs. 16r-25r.

Petitions after 1757 that utilized the language competency argument sometimes received surprisingly positive responses from royal authorities. Such was the case for a petition by Joseph Yrive, the *provincial* of the Dominican order in Tabasco. In April 1760, Yrive sent a letter to King Charles III containing petitions from various *indios* and *ladinos* in his regions who sought the return of their Dominican friars. Yrive's letter stated that the parish priests who had taken the place of these friars did not know the local languages, "to such an extent, that the Service of God and the zeal of Your Majesty are destroyed…" He continued on, noting that this fact was so widely known that "there is no one who can ignore it…" The *provincial* asked Charles III to read the testimony, and to rectify "the mistakes that cause irreparable harm…"—in other words, to return the Tabasco *doctrinas* to the Dominicans.[81]

In the testimony Yrives included in his report, various residents of Tabasco claimed that their new secular priests did not know their local languages, and thus should be removed from the parishes. Two years previous, in 1758, the indigenous residents of the Tabasco towns of Tacotalpa, Teapa and Tecomajiaca had apparently written to Yrive to inform him of their dire circumstances under their new secular clerics. In two letters—one from the natives of Tacotalpa, and the other from Teapa and Tecomajiaca—these towns' *alcaldes*, *regidores* and various other indigenous residents begged for the return of their friars, and asked the *provincial* to deliver their request to the king. Both letters complained that the new secular parish priests could not speak the local language. Neither specified exactly which language this was, but both expressed fear of the spiritual

[81] AGI, Guatemala 538.

consequences of their priests' linguistic failings. As the petition from Teapa and Tecomajiaca protested, "we have no solace, because we have no Father who knows our tongue…"[82]

The petition from the natives of Tacotalpa accused their secular priests not only of linguistic incompetence but also of cruelty. Unlike the Dominicans, their new *curas* did not believe in charity. Whereas their friars had previously provided free burial to poor residents who could not afford the fees, the secular clerics insisted on payment. As a result, the bodies of the poor went unburied until the priests could secure payment. In some cases, the neighbors of the dead had had to "keep vigil two or three nights, until the body was nearly rotting…"[83]

Non-indigenous local residents supported the natives' claims regarding the inadequacy and cruelty of their *curas*. Rather than passing the natives' letters on directly to the king, Yrives copied them out, and prefaced them with an additional petition from some *ladinos* and *españoles* who lived near Teapa, Tecomajiaca and Tacotlalpa. Like the native testimony, this letter asked for the return of their Dominican friars. Describing themselves as "loyal vassals" of the Crown and the natives as "needy and miserable," the *ladinos* and *españoles* expressed concern for the spiritual salvation of their indigenous neighbors.[84] Like the natives' petition, this letter complained that none of the bishopric's clerics was nearly as adept at native languages as the Dominican friars had been. As a

[82] *Ibid*.
[83] *Ibid*.
[84] *Ibid*.

result, Tabasco was suffering "the desolation of so many souls…"[85] Well aware of the 1757 law allowing the religious orders to retain two of their best parishes, local residents asked the king to ensure that this new measure was implemented in their communities. The document was signed by numerous locals, many of whom had important positions in the Inquisition, the army, or other significant institutions.[86]

The context in which the indigenous petitions from Teapa, Tecomajiaca and Tacotlalpa appear may call their veracity into question. The fact that the natives begged Yrive for help in these petitions would seem to indicate that their petition was spontaneous, borne of their own volition. However, the fact that the *ladinos*' letter is dated a month earlier suggests the opposite; if the native parishioners had concluded on their own that their friars must return, one would think their letter would have come before, not after the *ladino* one. Thus, it is possible that the natives of these towns drew up their petitions at the request of the *ladinos*, or perhaps of some Dominican friars. Moreover, the *provincial* included copies of only the native petitions, with no signatures from the original petitioners. Friars or local supporters might have pressured native authorities in these towns to write up the petitions, or Yrive himself could have forged them. On the other hand, popular protest against secularization was not uncommon, so it could be that the complaints in these letters were real; it is possible that the natives of

[85] *Ibid*.
[86] *Ibid*.

Tabasco really did pine for the return of their friars, and think them much kinder and more qualified than their newer secular priests.[87]

Yrive sent all the Tabasco petitions to the Council of the Indies, which, perhaps surprisingly, responded favorably. The Council first sent the document to a *fiscal*, who believed the letters and took them seriously, apparently in large part because the complaints came not just from natives, but also from *ladinos* and *españoles*: in his 1760 response, the fiscal noted that the letters were "signed by many Spaniards, as well as persons of quality and authority," insinuating that the *ladino* petition lent the natives' claims an air of credibility.[88] Perturbed by the thought that so many indigenous peoples had no way to communicate with their priests, the *fiscal* suggested that if there were not enough linguistically competent secular priests, then the Church should return these *doctrinas* to the Dominicans.[89]

The final resolution on the matter was not quite so radical. Although the members of the Council of the Indies agreed with the fiscal's concerns, they decided that they could not endorse his suggestion. They noted that returning the Tabasco *doctrinas* to the Dominicans would contradict previous secularization orders. However, the Council members agreed that any secular priests who did not know the appropriate languages should be removed from their parishes.[90] It is unclear whether any royal or ecclesiastical

[87] For instances in which indigenous peoples protested against secularization, see Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred*, 86 and Brading, *Church & State*, 5.
[88] AGI, Guatemala 538.
[89] *Ibid*.
[90] *Ibid*.

officials actually took any action to put the Council's request into practice. The Dominicans probably did not get to return to their Tabasco *doctrinas*.

Despite the disappointing outcome for the Dominicans, the responses from the *fiscal* and the Council of the Indies are telling: these royal authorities clearly found reports of secular clerics' linguistic incompetence highly unsettling. The Tabasco petitions had struck a nerve. The language ideology that Rubio y Salinas had promoted a few years earlier, which linked native language competency among the clergy with backwardness, had evidently not fully penetrated the state. It is difficult to tell whether these authorities responded positively to Yrives' petition because they saw the involvement of native tongues in ecclesiastical administration as positive, or because they felt it was a necessary evil in a region as remote and heavily indigenous as Tabasco. Regardless, it is clear that, although ecclesiastical language ideology was in flux, it had not made a complete transformation, even amongst royal authorities. Other friars would take advantage of the mendicant language ideology's transitional character during this period to try to forge a brand new ideology that would better suit their needs.

## A MORE INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE IDEOLOGY FOR A NEW ERA: FRAY DE LA ROSA IN THE 1770S

Whereas Yrives and his Tabasco witnesses continued to draw upon an old language ideology, Francisco Antonio de la Rosa Figueroa, who had defended the mendicants in a letter to the Duke of Arcos in 1753, tried to build a new one. As I demonstrate in Chapter Three, Hispanization had picked up steam by the early 1770s, as

a small group of reformers pushed for a radical approach to a Spanish-only state. Secularization had also continued more or less unabated. It should thus come as little surprise that, in addition to his 1753 letter, de la Rosa wrote two lengthy works in 1774: an untitled report on the effects of secularization, and a treatise called "Vindicias de la Verdad" (Defenses of the Truth). Just as in the 1750s, these newer works defended native languages alongside the mendicants, seeing Hispanization and secularization as closely linked. De la Rosa's report on secularization took a similar tactic to his 1753 letter, arguing that friars knew native languages far better than their secular counterparts. Thus, in both of these writings, he promoted a language ideology that linked friars to native languages, and secular clerics with linguistic incompetence.

"Vindicias de la Verdad," on the other hand, put forth a very different language ideology, which linked native tongues to both the mendicants and to certain sectors of the secular clergy. De la Rosa was convinced that, if the mendicants were going to survive, they would need to defend not only themselves, but also the other priests often associated with native tongues: the secular clerical proletariat. Therefore, although de la Rosa asserted that the Franciscans were superior to the secular clergy, he nevertheless argued that secular *lengua* priests were intelligent and respectable, in addition to being skilled at native tongues. Building upon already existing language ideologies that linked poor, undereducated secular priests and friars with native tongues, de la Rosa altered and combined these ideas to create a new one, in which the secular and regular clergy were no longer opposed. Instead, his new ideology proposed that all *lengua* priests were learned and skilled, especially if they were creoles.

Much like his letter to the Duke of Arcos in 1753, de la Rosa's 1774 report on secularization focused primarily on illustrating that the secular clergy was inept at serving parishioners, due largely to their failure to learn indigenous languages. Using records from his Santo Evangelio archive, he demonstrated that, between the early 1730s and 1749, Franciscan and Augustinian friars had had to fill in for a secular priest in more than 40 different parishes, because either the local cleric had abandoned his post, or he did not know the language of his parishioners. De la Rosa asserted that these cases were so dire for local indigenous peoples that they had driven Vizarrón y Eguiarreta, who was both archbishop and viceroy at the time, to fight against King Philip V's secularization orders in the 1730s. According to the friar, Vizarrón informed the monarch of the aforementioned records in a secret letter in 1734. Having apparently taken Vizarrón's warnings to heart, Philip V did not pursue secularization thereafter. If the secular clergy's incompetence had driven Vizarrón and Philip V to rescind secularization orders as early as the 1730s, de la Rosa posited, then what would the situation be like two decades after secularization began in earnest in the 1750s? If so many had been left without spiritual instruction in their own languages even then, then surely the number would be significantly greater by now.[91] By making the oft-repeated assertion that too few secular clerics knew indigenous languages, de la Rosa echoed many petitions of the early- to mid-1750s—including his own letter to the Duke of Arcos. In this case, the language ideology he invoked was an old one.

[91] BN, AF, Caja 127, exp. 1649, fs. 43-62.

The ideology de la Rosa constructed in "Vindicias de la Verdad" bore many similarities to the older one he used in his 1754 letter and 1774 report on secularization. Like his other writings, this work still venerated the mendicants, particularly the Franciscans, based largely on their linguistic expertise. De la Rosa contended that full Hispanization was impossible; given that none of the laws since the 17th century ordering the spread of Spanish had worked, it must be God's will for the natives to retain their own languages. After all, when humans built the Tower of Babel, God had punished them by creating a confusing multitude of tongues, so they could no longer understand one another. The friar posited that the successful evangelization of millions of souls in spite of this obstacle must mean that God was on the Franciscans' side—that he supported their efforts to learn numerous difficult languages in the name of their faith. The friar could not help but admire "the inscrutable mysteries of Divine Wisdom" that had spread confusion throughout the Americas by way of numerous languages, and sent the Franciscans there to learn these languages and combat idolatry.[92] This argument did not differ dramatically from those de la Rosa had made elsewhere: God had willed the Franciscans to spread Catholicism throughout the Americas, and he willed them to accomplish this by way of hard linguistic labor.

Yet this time the friar did something different. Although de la Rosa valorized the Franciscans once again in "Vindicias de la Verdad," this time he did not do so at the expense of the secular clergy. Instead, he directed his ire at the very reformers responsible for the linguistic incompetence of many secular priests: Archbishops Rubio y

[92] "Vindicias de la verdad," Bancroft MSS M-M 101 (1773-1774), f. 22.

Salinas and Lorenzana. As I illustrate in Chapter Three, Lorenzana, Rubio y Salinas's predecessor, proposed a radical and sudden form of Hispanization that would banish native tongues from ecclesiastical administration altogether. De la Rosa thought Rubio y Salinas should have insisted on ordaining numerous secular clergymen *a título de idioma* before ousting the religious orders, to ensure that all could communicate with their parishioners. Instead, the opposite had occurred: having avoided ordaining clerics *a título de idioma*, Rubio y Salinas had fostered a situation in which only a few, elderly clerics spoke the necessary languages, all of whom were quickly falling ill and dying. De la Rosa did not hide his horror at this situation: "What harm! What dangers! What consequences! What a pity! What perdition of the souls of the miserable Indians! What a harvest for the Devil! Neither my tongue nor my pen can consider this…"[93] According to de la Rosa, reformers' poorly conceived policies had (and would) lead inevitably to spiritual disaster for New Spain's indigenous peoples. Rubio y Salinas—not the secular clergy—was to blame.

The friar not only targeted reformers instead of the secular clergy—he even defended secular *lengua* priests from attacks by reformers like Lorenzana and King Charles III, which I describe in detail in Chapter Three. He devoted much of "Vindicias de la Verdad" to challenging Lorenzana's claim that *lengua* priests were "of low birth and worse customs"—a critique that drew on the clerical language ideology described in Chapter One. Fray de la Rosa described *mestizos*, *mulatos*, *lobos*, *chinos* (children of Philipinos and *mestizos* or *mulatos*), and others as "plebeian people and with a servile

[93] *Ibid*., fs. 29-30.

propensity," and noted that, so far as he knew, the archbishop had not ordained any such "blemishes" into the priesthood. Lorenzana would never have allowed such individuals to seek ordination even *a título de idioma*, for "this would discredit His Grace [the archbishop] if he ordained them…"[94] In other words, according to de la Rosa, *título de idioma* priests could not possibly be of low birth, given the ethnic requirements for joining the clergy. If any such individuals did manage to become clergymen, then it was Lorenzana's own fault for ordaining them.

The friar also defended *lengua* clerics' educational merits. As the following chapter demonstrates, Charles III claimed in 1770 that uneducated *lengua* priests received all the benefices, leaving nothing for the clerics who had worked hard to attain advanced degrees. De la Rosa challenged the king's statement by arguing that *lengua* priests were in fact more qualified for parish work than were highly educated clerics: "according to royal law, a cleric who speaks a language and is a good moralist [theologian] would be more suitable than a doctor of law who knows no languages."[95] He briefly described the intensive exams he had undergone in theology to become a secular priest, acquire a license to confess, and attain a benefice, conducted by learned and well-respected canons. Given that *lengua* priests had passed so many difficult exams, the friar wondered how they could possibly lack sufficient learning.[96]

De la Rosa also defended *lengua* priests—regular and secular alike—by claiming that most of them were creoles. He spent more than 20 pages of "Vindicias de Verdad"

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[94] *Ibid*., f. 41.
[95] *Ibid*., f. 42.
[96] *Ibid*., f. 42.

lauding the "nobility and modesty of the Republican Peoples of *criollismo*," whom he felt had been "defamed and vilified," by peninsular Spaniards, giving the king an unsavory and untrue impression of them.[97] The friar noted numerous instances of what he believed was unfair treatment of creoles, and in response described many impressive intellectual and literary accomplishments by creoles—especially creole priests. Among these accomplishments was many creole priests' mastery of "all the languages," which they had used to create "grammars, vocabularies, sermons, catechisms," and more.[98] The friar also listed the numerous prelates and canons in the Americas who had been creoles, to show creoles' importance and nobility. Given all these accomplishments, Rosa thought Lorenzana's contention that *lengua* priests hardly knew any theology was absurd.[99] These *lengua* priests were creoles, and creoles had proven their intellectual abilities time and time again.

With some exceptions, after the mid-1750s many mendicants altered considerably the ways they utilized language ideologies in their protests against secularization. Many ceased mentioning their language competency altogether, in hopes of disassociating themselves from the harmful language ideology espoused by reformers like Rubio y Salinas. Others, like Yrives, stuck with the status quo. Yrives' attempt to resuscitate the old language ideology, which linked native language competency with many of the religious orders' positive attributes, met a surprisingly positive response from royal authorities. Even as late as 1760, some officials still saw friars' linguistic skill as an

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[97] *Ibid*., f. 51.
[98] *Ibid*., fs. 66-67.
[99] *Ibid*., fs. 70-77.

essential component of ecclesiastical life. Meanwhile, de la Rosa sought to build a whole new language ideology, linking native tongues not only with friars, but also with secular *lengua* priests and with creole identity. Regardless of the tactic they chose, these mendicants all saw language ideologies as a means to power. If they could control language ideology, then perhaps they could save themselves from secularization.

## CONCLUSION

Some of the ideologies associated with indigenous languages during the 18th century are difficult, if not impossible, to define with complete certainty. During this period of dramatic reform measures, mendicant language ideologies changed considerably, but there was hardly any consensus as to precisely what they had become. Rubio y Salinas certainly saw no future for native tongues in ecclesiastical administration; nor did Lorenzana and various other reformers of the late 1760s and early 1770s, as I discuss in the following chapter. Others, such as de la Rosa, disagreed, and argued that the clergy's expertise in these languages was integral to a peaceful and spiritually sound viceroyalty.

Yet the battle over language ideology and policy during this period was not merely a competition between one ideology and another, one new and one old, one espoused by reformers and the other by friars. The mendicants did not simply push for a return to the old language ideology that had worked to their advantage, nor did they advocate uniformly for a particular ideology. Instead, friars forwarded different language

ideologies at different times, depending on what they thought would work best as a defense mechanism against secularization. De la Rosa even tried to forge multiple different meanings for native languages, deciding over time that, if the language regime was to favor the mendicants, it would need to favor secular *lengua* clerics and creole priests as well. Nor did royal authorities always agree on the role native tongues should play in ecclesiastical administration, as I demonstrate further in Chapter Five. Caught up in political struggles resulting from the Bourbon Reforms, and frequently shaped and re-shaped based on various groups' and individuals' needs, language ideologies were numerous, complex, and highly pliable during the mid- to late-18th century. Defining the language regime during this period is a highly complex matter, since ecclesiastical language ideologies varied so dramatically—not only between various warring factions, but also within them.

The mendicants may not have been the only group that contested language ideologies during this period of change. In particular, the testimony examined in this chapter indicates that indigenous peoples might have sometimes sought to shape the social meanings of their own languages among higher authorities. Although I was unable to find any Jesuit petitions against their 1767 expulsion, they, too, might have sought to alter language ideologies, given their reputation for linguistic prowess. Further research may demonstrate whether other social groups participated in conversations about language policy and ideology in the 18th century—whether the mendicants were unique in their flexible approach to language ideologies, or if the latter were even more contested than this chapter suggests.

## Chapter Three: The Origins of the Bourbon Hispanization Reforms

In 1770, King Charles III ordered that Spanish was now to be the universal language of his empire. Supposedly, many parish priests had received a benefice primarily because they spoke a native tongue. Instead, these men would now be judged based solely on their "merit" as theologians, and not at all on their language skills. The decree was not the monarch's work alone; rather, it was the result of several vocal prelates' and royal officials' continued efforts for such reform. Indeed, the 1770 order pulled much of its text from a letter from Archbishop Francisco Antonio de Lorenzana y Butrón of Mexico.

Lorenzana's involvement in the new language policy is unsurprising: he had a vocal and public disdain for the proliferation of native tongues in his archbishopric. In a pastoral letter issued two years previous, the prelate had described indigenous languages as "the caprice of men," "a contagion," and "a plague that infects the dogmas of our holy faith…"[1] He saw these languages as antithetical to the reform goals he and other authorities envisioned for the clergy and indigenous peoples. *Lengua* priests, whom Lorenzana considered lowly and uneducated, had no place in ecclesiastical administration. Yet, in a scholarly work on the conquest of Mexico, the very same prelate described Nahuatl as "very elegant [and] sweet," and praised Nahuatl linguists for their

[1] Lorenzana, Carta Pastoral V.

intellectual prowess.[2] Given his apparent affinity for Nahuatl and its scholars, how could Lorenzana promote Hispanization and refer to native tongues as "a contagion"? Why would he write so many pastoral letters and pleas to the monarch in hopes of replacing native languages with Spanish?

Lorenzana's apparently contradictory attitude toward indigenous tongues suggests that the Bourbon language reforms were much more complex and multifaceted than previous scholarship has implied. Various studies have contended that Bourbon reformers sought to spread Spanish in order to encourage secularization, harm the creole clergy, and/or make indigenous peoples less "Indian."[3] While I agree that secularization and "de-Indianization" were closely linked to language reform efforts, these reasons provide only a partial explanation. By attempting to boil Hispanization down to a single motivating factor, historians have oversimplified both the processes that forge language policies and the machinery of Bourbon rule. Lacking detailed analyses of how the Hispanization policy developed, these studies together give the impression that a monolithic Bourbon state sought to impose Spanish upon its empire in hopes of controlling the clergy and transforming Indians into Spaniards. The reality was much more complex.

In this chapter I explore the political and intellectual underpinnings of the Hispanization efforts of the mid- to late-18th century. I demonstrate that the language

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[2] Francisco Antonio de Lorenzana y Butrón, *Historia de Nueva España, escrita por su esclarecido conquistador Hernán Cortés, aumentada con otros documentos, y notas, por el ilustríssimo señor Don Francisco Antonio Lorenzana, Arzobispo de México* (1770).

[3] Bono López, "Las reformas borbónicas" ; Gonzalbo Aizpuru, *Historia de la educación*; Heath, *Telling Tongues*; Herrera, "Primary Education"; King, *Roots of Identity*; Morris, "Language in the Service of the State"; Tanck de Estrada, *Pueblos de indios y educación*; and Lodares, "Languages, Catholicism, and Power."

reforms stemmed from a variety of intellectual, cultural, political and personal factors that coalesced in the late 1760s and early 1770s, while King Charles III, Archbishop Lorenzana of Mexico, Bishop Francisco Fabián y Fuero of Puebla, and Viceroy Marquis de Croix of New Spain were in power. Drawing on the language ideologies described in the previous two chapters and on contemporary political and intellectual trends that spanned the Atlantic, these men—and Lorenzana and Fabián y Fuero in particular—determined that spreading their language was critical to revamping the clergy, "fixing" indigenous peoples, and rebuilding the Spanish Empire. The logic behind these reformers' language policy was highly complex and sometimes even appeared to be contradictory: it was rooted not in a single motivation, but in a tangled web of political, religious, and Enlightenment-inspired ideas and goals that together comprised a whole vision for the Spanish Empire.

Although the vision of empire that Lorenzana and his colleagues espoused reflected the tendencies of many contemporary reformers, in some ways it was unique to this small handful of individuals. Numerous royal and ecclesiastical officials had sought Hispanization as early as the 16th century. However, the militant brand of language reform that Lorenzana and his contemporaries advocated—an insistence that all parish priests immediately cease speaking native languages—was mostly limited to these few individuals' efforts in the late 1760s and early 1770s. Their radical approach to language policy was deeply rooted in the same political and intellectual trends that inspired other Bourbon reformers, but it also grew out of these individuals' own interpretations of—and contributions to—those trends. In other words, language policies in 18th-century New

Spain emerged from both their broader historical context and from the specific ideas and interpretations of particular men in power. Hispanization policies were not the work of some monolithic Bourbon governing body—nor even a broad majority in thinking—so much as a few radicals who held power for a few years. Moreover, these reforms emanated not from the metropole, but from peninsular Spaniards in the viceroyalty itself.

In what follows I build upon the recent "language regimes" approach in language policy scholarship, in particular its focus on "state traditions." As explained in the Introduction, state traditions are the traditions of policymaking and governance that constitute the history of a state. States often make decisions based on "path dependency," which means that a state's historical trajectory shapes (without determining) its possibilities for policymaking. In order to break from tradition, a state normally needs to experience a "critical juncture"—a dramatic change that elicits new patterns of governance.[4] The state traditions approach is valuable in large part because it encourages scholars to focus on the mindsets of the individuals involved in policymaking in tandem with the broader historical context in which they operated. It privileges the worldviews and perspectives of those who forged new language laws and, in doing so, provides an opportunity to truly understand their origins. I seek not to justify Hispanization policies or the clearly discriminatory philosophies that helped mold them, however, but rather to explain these policies' existence.

I utilize the state tradition framework to help explain major language policy changes for New Spain in the mid- to late-18th century. However, I build upon this

[4] Cardinal and Sonntag, "State Traditions and Language Regimes," 4-5.

framework by demonstrating that not only state traditions informed language policy changes during this period: so too did intellectual traditions, ones not always linked exclusively with governance. If we are to truly prioritize the mindsets and situations of the policymakers, as state traditions scholars aim to do, then we need to look beyond politics to other factors that influenced policymakers' thinking—in particular, to the world around them and their intellectual influences. As described previously, the mid-18th century saw a dramatic shift in governance ideologies amongst royal officials in Spain and New Spain, eliciting a series of sweeping reforms regarding the economy, political structure, the Church, and much more. The Spanish Enlightenment brought new ideas about not only governance, but also science, Church-State relations, the role of the state, and the very essence of humanity. The Bourbon Hispanization reforms were part and parcel of these broader changes, and went hand-in-hand with new ideas about the Church, the role of the clergy, and the nature of indigenous peoples. The 18th century's dramatic about-face on language policy would not have been possible or desirable to royal and ecclesiastical authorities without these other significant changes. It was a critical juncture for both state traditions and intellectual development.

My analysis of the intellectual and political origins of the Hispanization reforms centers on Lorenzana, who served as Archbishop of Mexico from 1766 until 1771. The reform was not his work alone: numerous ecclesiastics and royal officials were involved in this movement's creation and implementation, and some promoted Hispanization well before Lorenzana became archbishop (most notably his predecessor Manuel José Rubio y Salinas). Nevertheless, I have chosen to focus primarily on Lorenzana for three reasons.

First, Charles III issued his 1770 order prohibiting the practice of assigning benefices based on language competency—which I see as the apex of the language reform effort—not of his own volition, but at the request of three individuals: Lorenzana; his friend Fabián y Fuero, who served as Bishop of Puebla from 1764 until 1773; and the Marquis de Croix, who was Viceroy of New Spain between 1766 and 1771. Of these three, Lorenzana appears to have held the most sway over the monarch on this matter; as mentioned, much of the 1770 law was a direct copy of Lorenzana's letter to the King, indicating the leading role the prelate played in formulating this legislation. Second, of these three individuals, Lorenzana was the most prolific on the subject of clerical and language reform. His numerous pastoral letters and other publications provide substantial insight into both his reformist ideals and their intellectual basis.

Finally, Lorenzana was a product of his time: like many other reformist ministers at the time, he drew inspiration from the Spanish Enlightenment to renew both Church and Empire. His ideas both influenced and reflected those of many other Enlightenment-era intellectuals. In many cases, I describe some of the broader context of Lorenzana's thinking: the historical development of his ideas, other individuals or groups who agreed (or disagreed) with him, and the basic features of the cultural and intellectual moment that underpinned his thinking. A full investigation of the ideas about indigenous peoples, languages, politics, and the Church that circulated the viceroyalty and the metropolis during this period is beyond the scope of this dissertation. However, by using this influential archbishop as a focal point, I seek to illustrate that the language reforms of the

Bourbon period were grounded both in his (and his friends') personal inclinations and in the broader political and cultural trends in which he participated.

In what follows, I demonstrate that the Hispanization reforms of the late 1760s and early 1770s were shaped primarily by five ideas, all of which were rooted in Enlightenment philosophy and/or the new Bourbon ideology of governance. First, Lorenzana and his colleagues believed that indigenous peoples had the capacity to become full-fledged citizens and Christians—but only with the help of Spaniards and creoles. Second, the popular concept of *felicidad pública* (public happiness) dictated that Church and state alike should be responsible for the wellbeing and education of the people—and, thus, for "improving" the indigenous population. Third, priests were the best and most likely candidates to help natives make these changes. This meant the clergy had to have a good education and admirable customs so they would set a good example for their parishioners and pass on only the most theologically sound teachings. Fourth, Lorenzana and his colleagues thought *lengua* priests—and especially those ordained *a título de idioma*—were too poor and undereducated to serve as good parish priests, and were stealing all the benefices from more learned candidates. Thus, the clerical language ideology discussed in Chapter One helped induce the Hispanization reforms. Finally, reformers believed that native languages were dangerous and lowly weapons in some hands, but glorious and intellectual in others. Lorenzana in particular saw indigenous tongues as a respectable focus for linguistic, historical and ethnological study. When wielded by idolatrous parishioners or uneducated priests, however, these languages could be signs of inept authority and sacrilege that prevented indigenous peoples from

interacting with Spaniards, loving the Empire, or truly understanding the tenets of Catholicism.

I begin by briefly outlining the royal and ecclesiastical legislation from the 16th century through the mid-18th. Next, this chapter explores the goals and ideas regarding indigenous peoples, the clergy, and languages held by the primary instigators of the Hispanization effort, focusing in particular on Archbishop Lorenzana. Finally, I demonstrate how the reformist impulses of Lorenzana and his like-minded colleagues culminated in King Charles III's 1770 Hispanization law, which prohibited parish priests throughout the empire from speaking native languages. This law emerged from a critical juncture in both politics and intellectual development, and thus it was far more than a mere attack on the mendicant orders, indigenous peoples or the creole clergy. Instead, it was part of a whole new vision for the Spanish Empire.

## LANGUAGE LAWS BEFORE THE BOURBON REFORMS

The language policy that Lorenzana and his colleagues advocated in the 18th century differed dramatically from those the Church and Crown had promoted in the early colonial period. From the 16th century on, the Catholic Church had tended to officially support the use of whichever language potential converts could understand. In 1563, for instance, the Council of Trent decreed that parish priests should explain the sacraments in the vernacular language if necessary, and that bishops should appoint

someone to translate catechisms into "the vulgar tongue."[5] The Third Provincial Mexican Council, celebrated in 1585, issued similar orders. Like the Council of Trent, it decreed that someone should translate its stipulated catechism into each diocese's most common language, confirming that these translations would have the same authority as the Spanish version. The Third Provincial Council also ordered that, while Spaniards, black slaves, *mulatos* and Chichimecs should learn Christian doctrine in Spanish, parish priests should teach natives in their own language.[6]

Knowledge of a native tongue quickly became a standard requirement of priesthood in New Spain. This expectation became law in 1583, when a royal decree ordered that all priests had to be able to speak the language of the natives they were responsible for administering.[7] In order to ensure that enough preachers knew indigenous languages and could communicate with their parishioners, the Crown allowed priestly candidates who were fluent in a native language to pass ordination *a título de idioma* (by right of competency in an indigenous language), as described in Chapter One.

Although royal authorities required priests to know a native language, they also hoped to spread Spanish. Since the mid-16th century, the Crown had ordered priests and royal officials to provide opportunities for indigenous peoples to learn Spanish. The

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[5] "Session the Twenty-Fourth," Decree on Reformation, Chapter VII, in Waterworth, *The Council of Trent*.
[6] *Concilio III Provincial Mexicano*, Libro I, Título I, "De la doctrina que se ha de enseñar a los rudos," I and III. The Third Provincial Mexican Council also decreed that parish priests should promote the foundation of schools in which indigenous peoples could learn Spanish, because this would aid their Christian education. Although the Third Council held that the Spanish language and comprehension of Christian doctrine were highly complementary, it did not deem Spanish to be essential to proper indoctrination. Rather, most of its decrees—as well as those of Council of Trent—suggested that priests could most effectively explain the tenets of Christianity to indigenous peoples using their own languages.
[7] *Recopilación de Leyes*, Vol. I, Book I, Title VI, Law xxx, 45.

Crown issued its first such law for New Spain in 1550, ordering government officials to found Spanish-language schools for natives. The law decreed that indigenous languages were ineffective in communicating Christian doctrine because experience had shown that doing so inevitably led to imperfections in natives' understanding of Catholicism. Moreover, it stated, the wide variety of indigenous languages that existed in New Spain meant that priests could not possibly learn them all. Although this argument conveys a fairly pressing need for indigenous peoples to learn Spanish, the actual demands of the law were not particularly strict. It ordered New Spain's officials to found schools where possible, and to install teachers to train any natives who voluntarily wished to learn Spanish.[8] The Crown required that New Spain's government take steps to provide the means for indigenous peoples to learn it, but went no further in promoting Hispanization.

The Crown maintained this tolerant attitude toward linguistic diversity for the remainder of the 16th century and most of the 17th. Monarchs occasionally issued royal decrees during this time ordering officials to ensure that indigenous peoples learned Spanish, but provided little incentive to obey.[9] This changed slightly in the 1690s, when the tone of royal orders concerning languages became somewhat more strict. In 1691, the King issued yet another decree ordering that New Spain's viceroys, presidents, governors, *corregidores*, *alcaldes mayores*, bishops and archbishops comply with

[8] *Recopilación de Leyes*, Vol. II, Book XI, Title I, Law xviii, 193. The law ordered officials to provide teachers at no cost to the natives, but otherwise did not specify how schools should be funded.
[9] The Crown issued *reales cédulas* ordering officials to ensure that Indians learned Spanish in 1590, 1596, 1634, 1686, 1688, and 1689. Konetzke, *Colección de Documentos*, 1, n. 460 (1590); *Recopilación de Leyes*, Vol. I, Book I, Title XIII, Law v, 96 (1634); AGN, IV Caja 4188, Expediente 035 (1686); Tanck de Estrada, *Pueblos de indios y educación*, 156 (1688); and Konetzke, *Colección de Documentos* 2:1, n. 559 (1689).

previous orders regarding Spanish-language education. However, this time the law added the stipulation that indigenous peoples should not be able to occupy government posts without knowing the language.[10] Another decree, issued in 1694, again asked *gobernadores*, *corregidores* and *alcaldes mayores* to obey orders to found language schools, and threatened them with the *residencia*—a judicial investigation of their behavior at the end of their term.[11] These decrees from the 1690s introduced practical incentives for government officials to comply with Hispanization orders, and for natives to cooperate. Why the Crown suddenly expressed an interest in spreading the Spanish language at this time in particular is unknown; it is possible that some prelate pushed the king for language reform, as would occur nearly a century later.

In the early 18th century, prelates and the Crown occasionally repeated earlier orders regarding Hispanization. In 1717, for instance, Archbishop Joseph de Lanciego y Eguilaz bemoaned the poor understanding of Christian tenets amongst his native parishioners, and blamed the fact that the process of indoctrination was not normally accompanied by Spanish instruction.[12] In 1718, King Philip V ordered the same prelate to help establish Spanish-language schools, to help remedy what the monarch saw as widespread ignorance of the tenets of Christianity among indigenous peoples.[13] Monarchs periodically issued such orders during the first half of the 18th century, but no one appears to have acted on them in any serious capacity until the 1750s.[14]

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[10] Konetzke, *Colección de Documentos*, 3:1, n. 1 (1691).
[11] *Ibid*., 3:1, n. 21, (1694).
[12] Gonzalbo Aizpuru, *Historia de la educación*, 191.
[13] Konetzke, *Colección de Documentos*, 3:1 n. 101 (1718).
[14] See for instance Konetzke 3:1 n. 105 (1720).

In spite of these measures in the 1690s and early 1700s, Church and Crown alike required parish priests to know the languages of their parishioners well into the reign of the Bourbon dynasty. For much of the 18th century various authorities worked to ensure that *curas* complied with this language requirement, and, as indicated in Chapter One, no one altered it until 1770. For instance, in 1748, the Dean and Cabildo of Mexico's Cathedral ordered all the archbishopric's clerics who did not know the languages of their parishioners to be examined in the appropriate native tongue within the following six months.[15] Similarly, in 1755, Viceroy Revillagigedo the Elder reminded his successor, the Marquis of Amarillas, that parish priests must be able to communicate with native parishioners in their own tongues.[16]

Petitions from native parishioners also reveal that many authorities were committed to ensuring native languages were given a central role in parish administration. For instance, in 1749, King Ferdinand VI and the Council of the Indies responded to a petition by the indigenous peoples of San Martín Zapotitlán, in the Diocese of Puebla, in which the native community accused their parish priest of failing to know their language.[17] The king and the Council of the Indies determined that in this case and in others like it, the parish priest himself should be examined in the local language, rather than hiring *vicarios* to do the translating for him—a common practice discussed in

[15] BN, AF, Caja 110, exp. 1514, fs. 1-6.
[16] Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred*, 573 n. 125.
[17] Intriguingly, the available documentation on this case does not divulge which language this was. AGN, RCO Vol. 69, exp. 5.

Chapter One.[18] This ruling suggests that Ferdinand VI and his ministers believed most *curas* should know the languages of their parishioners.

Even as they insisted on a linguistically skilled clergy, however, royal and ecclesiastical authorities worked towards Hispanization. Once the earliest Bourbon Reforms began in the 1740s, royal and ecclesiastical authorities resumed the course initially begun in the 1690s, taking more seriously the idea that natives should learn Spanish. After paying little attention to the issue for the first half of the 18th century, royal interest in teaching Spanish to indigenous peoples suddenly resurfaced in 1754, with a decree from Ferdinand VI requiring compliance with Hispanization orders from the 1690s. Once again, the monarch told prelates to ensure that all indigenous peoples—apparently regardless of age or gender—learn Spanish, and Spanish-language Christian doctrine. Yet this decree also reflected the general consensus at the time that *curas* should be able to communicate with their flocks: the very same 1754 order demanding Hispanization also required parish priests to know the language of their parish, or risk removal from their benefices.[19]

The timing of the 1754 order was likely influenced at least in part by Manuel José Rubio y Salinas, who served as Archbishop of Mexico from 1748 until 1765. The prelates was the first major authority to push for complete Hispanization. As described in the previous chapter, Rubio y Salinas thought natives' inability to speak Spanish stunted their spiritual and intellectual development. During discussions with the monarch and his

[18] *Ibid*.
[19] Konetzke, 3:1, n. 166 (1754).

ministers over secularization in the 1750s, he argued that founding schools for teaching Spanish would be insufficient: natives needed more exposure to Spanish in their everyday lives than solely receiving formal language education. If priests were more willing to speak Spanish to their parishioners, then perhaps the latter group would forget their own languages more easily. Moreover, Rubio y Salinas thought the Archbishopric of Mexico had an oversupply of *lengua* priests. Thus, when Ferdinand VI suggested that Mexico City's university hire new language professors and require all theology students to study Nahuatl, Rubio y Salinas disagreed vehemently. In his mind, employing more *lengua* priests was the last thing the archbishopric and its native parishioners needed.[20]

Despite his strong inclination towards Hispanization, the changes Rubio y Salinas sought were not nearly as swift or dramatic as those Lorenzana would push for a few decades later. Rubio y Salinas never ordered parish priests to cease speaking native languages. His actions suggest that he might have thought it imprudent to suddenly deprive all indigenous peoples of spiritual instruction in their own languages. Instead, he sought gradual change. Sometime around 1749, Rubio y Salinas announced his intention to begin granting benefices specifically to clerics who did not know the local language; then, in 1753, he claimed he would no longer ordain clerics *a título de idioma*.[21] The same year, he issued three edicts to local parishes, requesting compliance with previous royal orders that asked indigenous peoples be given an opportunity to learn Spanish. He

[20] Caja 104CL, Libro 3.
[21] BN, AF, Caja 127, exp. 1649, fs. 43-72.

also ordered the establishment of various Spanish-language schools for children.[22] Finally, in 1755, he announced that he had purposely granted benefices where he believed natives had been well-instructed in Spanish, to *curas* who did not speak the local native tongue.[23] Rubio y Salinas's actions all suggest that he took an incremental approach to Hispanization, whereby indigenous peoples would gradually learn Spanish and be weaned off of interacting with priests in their own languages.

The next prelate, Lorenzana, would also push for language reform, but would take a much more radical approach than Rubio y Salinas. During Lorenzana's tenure as archbishop of Mexico in the late 1760s and early 1770s, the Hispanization movement reached its apex. He and other men in power at the time—King Charles III, Bishop Fabián y Fuero of Puebla, and Viceroy Marquis de Croix—pushed for language reform measures that went well beyond what Rubio y Salinas had advocated. These four individuals released numerous pastoral letters, decrees and orders between 1766 and 1771 that not only encouraged indigenous peoples to learn Spanish, but also pushed (to varying degrees) for the removal of native languages from parish administration altogether. All four made similar arguments regarding the communicative capacity of native languages, the intellectual capacity of indigenous peoples, the responsibilities of the clergy, and the nature of empire. Lorenzana's writings in particular provide a valuable window into the political and intellectual critical junctures that led to the radical 1770 law.

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[22] Tanck de Estrada, *Pueblos de indios y educación*, 158.
[23] *Ibid*., 162.

## FELICIDAD PÚBLICA

Spain and New Spain underwent substantial changes during the mid- to late-18th century, when Bourbon-dynasty ministers sought to overhaul the Empire's political culture, centralize authority, improve the empire's efficiency, increase revenues, subject the Church to the state, and increase state intervention into nearly all aspects of life. This far-reaching reform effort alone constitutes a critical juncture in the Empire's state traditions: although Bourbon ministers in many ways built upon the ideas of earlier reformers, the political structure they sought was drastically different from the previously un-centralized Empire, which had been made up of numerous disparate institutions that were not always closely controlled by the Crown. Perhaps more important, however, is that much of the impetus behind these drastic changes was the influx of new ideas associated with the Spanish Enlightenment. As Gabriel Paquette has demonstrated, a broad swath of new and sophisticated ideas—often borrowed from other nations and reshaped to fit Spanish needs and circumstances—shaped the political ideologies that informed the Bourbon Reforms.[24]

Although the major push for Hispanization came from royal and ecclesiastical officials in New Spain, not Spain itself, language reform nevertheless emerged from intellectual trends in the metropole—the same ones that shaped the other major reform measures of the late 18th century. Although he never said so explicitly, Archbishop Lorenzana's ideas regarding indigenous peoples and the clergy reveal that he was heavily

[24] Gabriel Paquette, *Enlightenment, Governance, and Reform in Spain and its Empire, 1759-1808* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008).

influenced by new ideas about governance circulating among Charles III's royal ministers in Spain at the time—perhaps unsurprisingly, given that Lorenzana was a Spaniard himself and seems to have considered himself something of an "Enlightened" intellectual.

Lorenzana and his colleagues were especially interested in the concept of "*felicidad pública*" (public happiness), an idea that was critical to the Bourbon ideology of governance, as Gabriel Paquette has demonstrated. *Felicidad pública* drew inspiration primarily from the Italian Ludovico Antonio Muratori, who contended that the state's interest were consonant with those of his vassals; thus, a good prince should strive to make his whole empire happy. Bourbon officials who borrowed this idea thus valued the public good over individual liberty, and believed that a rising population and proliferation of consumer goods were signs of a prosperous and successful nation.[25]

Reformers saw *felicidad pública* as the responsibility of the Crown, not of its people. It was the state's prerogative, they thought, to "mold the character and shape the aspirations of the Crown's subjects."[26] For the sake of the public good, the state would need to intervene not only in the economy and local governance, but also in every other aspect of public life: subjects would need to adhere to certain behavioral norms, particularly by contributing to state and community. Although *felicidad pública* required the expansion of state power, however, the power of the monarch could not be arbitrary; rather, since the monarch was responsible for the public good, he was also responsible for

[25] *Ibid*., 56-58.
[26] *Ibid*., 61.

the wellbeing of his vassals. To uplift the state, the King had to uplift his people. Therefore, reformers saw projects like public education as mutually beneficial for both state and people.[27] For example, Spanish banker and influential thinker Francisco Cabarrús argued that "governments have the greatest interest in the progress of the Enlightenment [*las luces*]… our people, brutalized and infected by oppression and error, are not susceptible to any pacific reform while they remain untreated."[28] Thus, it was the monarch's responsibility to ensure that subjects were happy, well-educated, and in a position to contribute to the public good.

Many reformers saw the Church as a critical vehicle for attaining public happiness. Paquette notes that reformers used *felicidad pública* to justify state control over the Church, the elimination of clerical autonomy, and the subjection of ecclesiastics to royal authority.[29] Although these men sought to limit the Church's autonomy and authority, they also valued Catholicism, as well as the Church's significant sway over the people. Thus, many believed that members of the clergy should be especially well-educated; they would need to be if they were to carry out royal reforms effectively. One of Charles III's ministers, the Conde de Floridablanca, contended that "the enlightenment of the clergy… is essential for the realization of all these important projects… a secular and a regular clergy, informed by good studies, would know the fundamental limits which separate ecclesiastical and royal power."[30] If the monarch was to ensure his

[27] *Ibid*., 59-61.
[28] *Ibid*., 59.
[29] *Ibid*., 73.
[30] *Ibid*., 74.

people's happiness, he would need a well-educated clergy to help the masses realize their potential.

These ideas about the relationship between education, the clergy and the public good heavily influenced Lorenzana's thinking. Much like the reformers inspired by the concept of *felicidad pública*, Lorenzana believed that authority figures should uplift and improve the public. He felt it was his responsibility, and that of his parish clergy, to educate the indigenous masses and set a good example, so they could become good citizens and good Christians. If indigenous peoples faltered, their clergymen and prelates were to blame. Although Lorenzana never said so explicitly, his writings indicate that his primary concern was the *felicidad pública* of his indigenous flock. This priority guided his projects to reform indigenous peoples and the clergy, and to banish native languages from parish administration.

## A Reformist Prelate

At the center of Lorenzana's project to reform the clergy were two beliefs. The first was that, with the right guidance, indigenous peoples could and should be just as productive and useful for the public good as Spaniards. Second, Lorenzana believed it was priests' responsibility to provide that guidance and serve as role models for their indigenous parishioners. These two beliefs shaped the prelate's stance on not only clerical reform, but also language policy. Both ideas were rooted both in intellectual and

political trends of the time—in New Spain, in Spain, and in the West more broadly—and in his conversations with others, especially Bishop Fabián y Fuero.

Lorenzana and Fabián y Fuero's mutual influence upon one another was probably critical to the development of the radical Hispanization program in the late 1760s and early 1770s. The two prelates began their friendship in Salamanca, Spain, around 1750, and continued to be close while serving their terms in the viceroyalty. They communicated frequently (both by letter and in person) at least as early as 1769, the year both of them released pastoral letters ordering indigenous peoples and the clergy to cease using native tongues. Lorenzana issued his letter only 18 days after Fabían y Fuero published his. The next year, Fabián y Fuero also published an edict that in many ways echoed the Archbishop's thinking regarding indigenous languages, requiring priests to instruct their parishioners only in Spanish. As Dorothy Tanck de Estrada posits, given this timing and the frequent contact between the two friends, it is highly likely that Lorenzana's pastoral letter from that year (referred here as his Fifth Pastoral Letter) resulted in part from exchanges of ideas with Fabián y Fuero.[31] The same can be assumed regarding some of Lorenzana's later orders and studies, some of which Fabián y Fuero participated in directly.[32] Both men believed fiercely that the proliferation of native tongues was an obstacle to indigenous "progress," and, thus, to the progress of New Spain.

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[31] Tanck de Estrada, *Pueblos de indios y educación*, 169 and 173.

[32] For more on the mutual influence between Fabián y Fuero and Lorenzana, see Luisa Zahino Peñafort, *El Cardenal Lorenzana y el IV Concilio Provincial Mexicano* (México: Miguel Ángel Porrua, 1999), 38-44.

## INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES, THE "CAPRICE OF MEN"

Lorenzana's distaste for the prevalence of indigenous languages is undeniable. His Fifth Pastoral Letter, released in 1769, makes this especially clear. Lorenzana believed that the fact that many *indios* did not know Spanish was "the caprice of men… it is a contagion, which separates *indios* from conversations with *españoles*…" and "a plague that infects the dogmas of our holy faith…"[33] The archbishop thought the perseverance of indigenous languages was so vile in large part because it was "a harmful means of separating the natives of some pueblos from others, due to the diversity of languages…"[34] This divisiveness made governance difficult and prevented indigenous peoples from learning Spanish customs. Moreover, the language barrier made it difficult for priests to recognize unorthodox beliefs among indigenous parishioners. Lorenzana believed natives' monolingualism also prevented them from valuing what their parish priests taught them, desiring an education, or appreciating the majesty of the monarch. Finally, the archbishop stated that the current linguistic situation "maintains an ember of fire in the breast, the fomentation of discord, and the flint of scandal, [which causes] vassals of the same sovereign to see one another with loathing."[35] According to Lorenzana, New Spain's diversity of languages was a loathsome obstacle to "improving" indigenous peoples: it caused communication difficulties, kept natives from identifying with their Spanish-speaking neighbors, and prevented them from appreciating education or understanding the principles of the faith.

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[33] Lorenzana, Carta Pastoral V.
[34] *Ibid*.
[35] *Ibid*.

The archbishop attributed his negative attitude toward the proliferation of native tongues in part to the idea that indigenous languages were unsuitable for communicating the tenets of Catholicism—an idea that was becoming increasingly common at the time.[36] In his Fifth Pastoral Letter he argued that, although Spaniards had made various additions to Nahuatl, the language still could not accurately convey many elements of Christian doctrine. Apparently, because they did not know Spanish, many indigenous peoples referred to the host as the "consecrated tortilla"—a food that would have been more familiar to them than a wafer.[37] The archbishop also lamented that the widespread use of native tongues made it too difficult for clerics to identify unorthodoxy. "How will idolatry and superstitions be banished," he asked, if "the parish priests or *vicarios* do not understand the peculiar terms with which the *indios* maliciously explain themselves, so that even the *ministros de idioma* [*lengua* priests] do not understand them?"[38] Parish priests "of the best conduct" had assured him that it could be extremely difficult to understand indigenous parishioners' confessions well enough to ensure orthodoxy.[39]

Lorenzana's longtime friend, Bishop Francisco Fabián y Fuero of Puebla, strongly agreed with the archbishop on this point. In 1769 Fabían y Fuero released a pastoral letter that, much like Lorenzana's writings, attributed the persistence of "idolatry" in part to indigenous peoples' limited knowledge of Spanish. Fabián y Fuero contended that in the early stages of conversion, it had been necessary to speak to natives in their own

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[36] For instance, Lorenzana's predecessor, Rubio y Salinas, shared this belief. Brading, *The First America*, 493 and Caja 104CL, Libro 3 (1748-1753).
[37] Lorenzana, Carta Pastoral V.
[38] *Ibid*.
[39] *Ibid*.

languages. Once a few years had passed since initial evangelization, however, "there is no doubt that the flock should know the language of the pastors."[40] Therefore, Fabián y Fuero believed that the various 16th-century ecclesiastical orders requiring priests to know native languages applied only to that early stage of colonization. It was no longer relevant to his own century, when most natives in his bishopric of Puebla had already converted to Catholicism.

Fabián y Fuero also echoed Lorenzana's concerns that native tongues could not properly communicate the basic principles of the Catholic faith. He worried that the maintenance of indigenous languages created too much continuity with natives' pre-Catholic past, thereby increasing the incidence of "superstition" and unorthodoxy. Moreover, much like Lorenzana, Fabián y Fuero believed that the supposed inferiority of native languages inherently made them an unsuitable medium for learning Christian doctrine.[41] Perhaps due to the influence of these two prelates, the Fourth Provincial Mexican Council—whose purpose was to promote Charles III's ecclesiastical reforms, and whose sessions received extensive participation from Lorenzana and Fabián y Fuero—decreed that no one could print religious books or treatises in any "vulgar" indigenous languages without the approval of the prelate.[42] The Council's decree claimed

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[40] Tanck de Estrada, *Pueblos de indios y educación*, 171. Translation mine.

[41] *Ibid*., 171-172.

[42] New Spain's prelates convened for the Fourth Provincial Council in 1771 on the order of King Charles III, who had delivered a document called the "Tomo Regio" in 1769, requesting the celebration of a provincial council in each major city of the kingdoms of New Spain. The council's purpose was to promote changes that Charles III and his ministers sought to implement as part of the Bourbon reforms, in hopes of rejuvenating and unifying the Church in the New World. The Pope never approved the Council's decrees, and thus they never held the force of law. However, the Fourth Council's orders are nevertheless useful for this chapter, as they provide a window into the beliefs of New Spain's prelates at the time—particularly

that this was because native languages had an insufficient vocabulary to describe certain mysteries of the Christian faith.[43] The decree reflected the beliefs of Lorenzana and Fabián y Fuero, both of whom saw the proliferation of native tongues in ecclesiastical administration as an improper means of spreading the faith, and an obstacle to civilization and progress.

## MONOLINGUALISM, GOVERNANCE AND CIVILIZATION

One of Lorenzana's reasons for supporting Hispanization was to emulate what he saw as the world's great civilizations—and, in doing so, to make Spain a comparably great civilization. In his Fifth Pastoral letter he argued that, "there has never been a cultured nation in the world that, when it extended its conquests, did not do the same with its language…"[44] For example, he noted, "the Greeks saw as barbarous the other nations that did not know their [language]," and "the Romans, after defeating the Greeks, required them to accept their Latin language…"[45] The Romans were so insistent on spreading Latin that "they did not permit anyone who spoke another foreign language to approach the Senate for business."[46] As a result of these efforts, Latin "has become a common language in all nations, and in every book… Latin is now the mother tongue of

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those of Lorenzana and Fabián y Fuero, whose influence pervaded the Council's sessions. Luque Alcaide, "Reformist Currents," 743 and Zahino Peñafort, *El Cardenal Lorenzana*, 38-39.

[43] *Concilio IV*, Libro I, Título II, "De la impresión y lectura de libros," paragraphs 1-2.

[44] Lorenzana, Carta Pastoral V.

[45] *Ibid*.

[46] *Ibid*.

the erudite."[47] In the archbishop's mind, if Spain and its empire were to succeed on the same scale as Greece and Rome, then Spain needed to spread its language throughout its colonies. This was simply how "cultured nations" operated.

Lorenzana also contended that Spanish monolingualism would lead to better governance, more orderly conduct among citizens, a feeling of brotherhood among all residents of the Empire, and—most of all—more obedience to hierarchy and the Spanish Crown. Citing the legal scholar Solórzano, Lorenzana wrote that "disturbances, riots and civil sedition" were more easily incited "when they are hatched amongst people of a foreign language…" He used the Bible to support his point: according to the scriptures, "the separation of nations at the Tower of Babel was done by God, as punishment for their arrogance, saying: "Come, let us mix up their language, so that no one understands or perceives the voice of his neighbor."[48] New Spain's diversity of languages was thus a curse from God that divided the people from one another, causing civil unrest that kept the viceroyalty from moving forward and preventing the Empire (and its residents) from reaching their full potential.

Speaking a common language, on the other hand, would forge a brotherhood among citizens that would unite the Spanish Empire under the monarch's leadership. Lorenzana contended that, "speaking a single language… begets true love and fondness

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[47] *Ibid*. This was a common idea among linguists during the 18th century, particularly in England, whose linguists hoped to turn the English language into a "third classical language" (following Greek and Latin) by spreading a standardized version of it, first within Britain, and then throughout the rest of the British Empire. In doing so, they hoped to forge a "metaphysical empire" of language and literature that would outlast the British Empire's political existence. Adam R. Beach, "The Creation of a Classical Language in the Eighteenth Century: Standardizing English, Cultural Imperialism, and the Future of the Literary Canon," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 43:2 (2001), 117-141.

[48] Lorenzana, Carta Pastoral V.

from some people to others, a familiarity not possible between those who do not understand one another…"[49] A common tongue would beget "a society, brotherhood, civility and order"—all of which were critical "for spiritual governance… for commerce, and politics…" Speaking the same language would empower the empire's citizens to put aside their differences, feel more united, and work together for the good of the nation. Moreover, monolingualism would help citizens to put aside their "aversion for those who are in command."[50] Indeed, according to Plato, wrote Lorenzana, none of the world's most successful nations had achieved "complete union, stable peace, and perfect subordination to the sovereign without common knowledge of a single language…"[51] A common language would not only bring citizens together, but would also bond them with the monarch, thereby encouraging obedience and peace.

The archbishop thought multilingualism complicated governance in part because it was impossible for every royal official to know every language spoken by New Spain's indigenous population. As a result, he thought natives often lacked access to royal justice, and thus the full benefits of imperial citizenship. Lorenzana lamented that the viceroy and the members of the *Audiencia* could not understand the complaints of indigenous citizens, who, he said, generally "feigned muteness" rather than speak their minds to these royal authorities. Using an interpreter was not acceptable either, since this could make secret issues public, with sometimes-devastating results. This was a problem on the local level, as well: the prelate thought it was silly to appoint an *alcalde mayor* "among

[49] *Ibid*.
[50] *Ibid*.
[51] *Ibid*.

people who do not understand him, and whom he does not understand, as if they were in Greece or Barbary…"[52] Without an authority who knew the proper indigenous language, there was no way an indigenous population could have its concerns heard and addressed.

The multiplicity of languages also complicated ecclesiastical governance; like royal officials, prelates could not possibly learn such a vast quantity of languages. "The bishop," wrote Lorenzana, "is the first and greatest priest of all of them, and he does not and cannot understand such a diversity of languages in his diocese…"[53] He stated that Montenegro's *Itinerario* instructed all *curas* to know the languages of their parishioners. However, Montenegro "was not aware that… every day the languages of the *indios* would be on the rise, and Spanish declining…"[54] This was a problem because, during a bishop's visitation to the parishes of his diocese, "he must hear the complaints of the *indios* against the *cura*… in secret, without an interpreter," and also discover "the many hidden impediments to the dispensation of internal justice that the *indios* do not want to reveal to others…"[55] The multiplicity of languages spoken in each diocese thus complicated prelates' jobs, making some of their prime responsibilities next to impossible. According to Lorenzana, "a pastor must understand his flock…"[56] Otherwise, how could he care for them, and ensure their religious wellbeing?

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[52] *Ibid*.
[53] *Ibid*.
[54] *Ibid*.
[55] *Ibid*.
[56] *Ibid*. Fabián y Fuero and Viceroy Marquis de Croix made similar arguments in letters they wrote to the Council of the Indies in 1769 asking for royal backing for Hispanization reform. Both contended that imposing a single language would make for better governance by making it easier for priests to do their jobs, eliminating the need for interpreters in both royal and ecclesiastical matters, and eliminating

## "HOW LITTLE WE PASTORS HAVE PROGRESSED IN CARING FOR OUR FLOCK..."

According to Lorenzana, the archbishop had to be able to understand indigenous peoples, because it was the responsibility of each prelate and his priests to instruct parishioners and facilitate their spiritual growth. Thus, the archbishop placed the blame for the proliferation of native languages squarely upon the Catholic Church, and on parish priests in particular. He lamented "how little we pastors have progressed in caring for our flock..."[57] By neglecting to spread the Spanish language, churchmen had failed indigenous peoples, allowing natives' monolingualism to persist to their own detriment.

Since it was ecclesiastics' fault that native languages still persisted, it was their responsibility to rectify the situation. In his Fifth Pastoral Letter, Lorenzana asked all Spanish-speakers—from royal officials to *hacienda* owners and all other citizens—to help ensure that indigenous peoples throughout the viceroyalty learned Spanish. Despite his far-reaching plea, however, the primary targets of his order were priests: according to the archbishop, clerics, more than anyone, were responsible for teaching natives Spanish and ensuring that they used it on a regular basis. This was because, unlike political figures like *alcaldes*, clerics frequently interacted with indigenous peoples. Moreover, indigenous peoples were supposed to respect parish priests, "whom they see as their father, teacher and spiritual director…"[58] Given this revered position clerics held, Lorenzana guessed that, with instruction, *indios* could learn Spanish in just a few years. Sharing Lorenzana's belief, Fabián y Fuero asked priests to spread Spanish, and even

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communication difficulties between royal authorities and indigenous peoples. Yannakakis, *The Art of Being In-Between*, 173-174.

[57] Lorenzana, Edicto VIII (1768).

[58] Lorenzana, Carta Pastoral V.

promised in his own 1769 pastoral letter that he would base ecclesiastical promotions in part on clerics' demonstrated dedication to explaining Christian doctrine in Spanish and providing teachers to instruct parishioners in the language.[59]

In a 1769 circular, Viceroy Marquis de Croix similarly blamed priests for failing to ensure that indigenous peoples learned Spanish and, therefore, proper Christian doctrine. He accused parish priests of "having secured their [Indians'] withdrawal from the use of Castilian…"[60] He stated that he had asked the archbishop to ensure that clerics obeyed royal law by teaching their parishioners Christian doctrine in Spanish. The viceroy mentioned that royal officials (*justicias*) should contribute to this effort as well, but he did not specify how they should do so, aside from complying with previous laws on the matter.[61] However, in a later circular released in December 1770, the Marquis ordered officials to ensure that only *indios* who knew Spanish occupied local political positions like *alcalde*, *fiscal* or *gobernador*. He also asked officials to tell all *indios*—not just those who held political office—to speak only Spanish on a regular basis, seemingly not realizing that such an order could not possibly be enforceable.[62] Yet, despite his orders to local *justicias*—and indirectly, to indigenous peoples—the viceroy placed the blame for the current linguistic (and spiritual) situation upon clerics, and no one else. He did not state his reasoning, but it is probable that his logic was the same as Lorenzana's: as men of substantial spiritual authority who interacted with indigenous peoples on a

[59] Tanck de Estrada, *Pueblos de indios y educación*, 173.
[60] AGN, Bandos Vol. 7, exp. 47.
[61] *Ibid*.
[62] AGN, Bandos Vol. 7, exp. 91.

regular basis, clerics were well-placed to enforce language reform. The clergy would be responsible for helping natives realize their full potential.

## "As noble a soul as the Europeans"

Lorenzana and his fellow reformers believed that indigenous peoples had the capacity to become full-fledged human beings, but had not yet reached that state. They thought natives required the assistance of creoles and Spaniards to become good, productive citizens and good Christians. Religious observance, rationality, learning and good citizenship all went hand-in-hand; if a native could learn to embody one of these values, then the other connected values would naturally follow soon after. Good Catholics would easily become more learned, more rational, and more productive. Therefore, priests were responsible not only for ensuring indigenous peoples' spiritual wellbeing, but also for helping them become more rational, educated citizens.

Lorenzana believed indigenous peoples had an inherent capacity for rational and Christian behavior; all they needed was a little help from creoles and Spaniards. He contended that "the Indians have as noble a soul as the Europeans, created in the image and likeness of God, and with the disposition to be led towards this end [achieving eternal life]..."[63] With some assistance, indigenous peoples' "souls [could] attain a greater solidity of faith, a better understanding of agriculture and commerce, [and] more desire

[63] Lorenzana, Edicto VIII.

for knowledge (which they currently lack)…"[64] Therefore, clergymen, creoles and Spaniards had a critical role to play in natives' development. As Lorenzana put it, "the spiritual and temporal happiness of the Indians depends on the administration of prelates, parish priests, and even all other classes of people…"[65]It was up to the non-indigenous sectors of society to instill progress in New Spain's natives.

According to the archbishop, priests and other individuals could help "improve" indigenous peoples in part by setting a good example for them. "In America," he wrote, "the natives' spiritual and temporal happiness depends upon the good conduct of parish priests, who are the mirror in which [natives] see themselves."[66] If clerics behaved in a properly Christian fashion, then so too would their indigenous parishioners. Other creoles and Spaniards might also assist by imparting their cultural values upon natives. By imitating others, indigenous peoples could prove to themselves that, "like the most cultured peoples, they too are created in the image and likeness of God, have a rational soul, and the power for noble talents." Meanwhile, they would also demonstrate to the world that they could use these talents "for the good of their salvation, the enlargement of temporal riches, and better order…"[67] In other words, by imitating their priests and other non-indigenous peoples, *indios* would learn to be productive, "civil," learned and

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[64] Lorenzana, "Exhortacion a los Párrocos para que cuiden, que los Naturales sepan, y practiquen las Reglas, que se señalan" (1768). Referred to hereafter as "Exhortacion."
[65] Lorenzana, "Exhortacion."
[66] Lorenzana, Edicto VIII.
[67] Lorenzana, "Exhortacion."

religious people. They would live in towns, observe the sacraments and respect the Church and Crown and, in doing so, contribute more to the prosperity of New Spain.[68]

Since it was largely *curas*' responsibility to set a good example for indigenous peoples, Lorenzana blamed clerics for what he saw as "defects" in indigenous behavior. "With Christian doctrine," Lorenzana argued, "one learns the principal fundamentals of natural and divine law, discards idleness, achieves cleanliness, banishes ignorance and idolatry, [and] forms a resident—Christian, useful to society, father of families, and a good republican…"[69] Lorenzana saw Christian doctrine as the gateway to, and basis for, molding good, productive citizens. Therefore, spiritual guidance was the obvious first step to "fixing" indigenous peoples. The instigators should be parish priests, rather than natives themselves.

Not only Christian doctrine would provide the scaffolding for an improved native citizenry: so too would the law. Lorenzana believed indigenous peoples needed help to become better Catholics and citizens in large part because they would never read royal and ecclesiastical laws themselves. Without law to guide them, he believed that

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[68] Lorenzana even allowed for the possibility that, with the right guidance, indigenous peoples could become clergymen—provided they spoke Spanish, of course. In his Fifth Pastoral Letter he posited that, regardless of whether they were *españoles* or *indios*, clerics were likely to serve their parishes well, so long as they were not ordained *a título de idioma*. He thought clerics of either ethnicity would happily speak only Spanish to their parishioners. According to Lorenzana, indigenous clerics would presumably be thankful that Catholicism had spread among their people, and would thus seek to "banish anything serving as an impediment to the natives' greater enlightenment, Christianity, and order…" He felt they would make every effort to advance "the spiritual and temporal good of [indigenous peoples], which without doubt involves, in large part, that everyone speaks the same language, [and] that they communicate with the *españoles*…" Regardless of their ethnicity, thought Lorenzana, so long as they had the proper qualifications to become *curas*, these individuals would be happy to help extend the Spanish language for the wellbeing of their parishioners. Lorenzana, Carta Pastoral V.

[69] Lorenzana, "Exhortacion."

indigenous peoples "entirely lack any awareness of what helps them or harms them…"[70] In hopes of remedying this situation, Lorenzana drew up a list of "Rules for ensuring that the natives of these kingdoms are spiritually and temporally happy." He ordered that, twice a month after Mass, *gobernadores* and *alcaldes* should read these rules aloud to the residents of each town under their jurisdiction, and explain their meaning. He felt that these rules contained the key to "the whole heart and substance of national prosperity…"[71] Likely realizing that reading these laws in Spanish would do little good in many areas, he noted specifically that, if necessary, *gobernadores* and *alcaldes* should read and explain these rules "*en el idioma*"—that is, in whatever language residents would understand.[72]

The list that Lorenzana hoped *alcaldes* and *gobernadores* would read to town residents included 13 rules concerning religion, political office, productivity, peace, illness, schooling, and more. For instance, he ordered that every indigenous father should have a house for his family, and maintain hens, turkeys, pigs, a cow or goats, plus one mule for transportation purposes. All indigenous peoples should work, maintain clean beds (to avoid illness), sleep separately from their children, avoid fights among themselves, educate their children, listen to Mass and avoid drunkenness. *Caciques* were to dress and comport themselves with honor and decency (possibly meaning they should dress and act like Spaniards). *Gobernadores* should punish those who robbed or got drunk, and residents were instructed to respect their superiors and obey their parish

[70] *Ibid*.
[71] *Ibid*.
[72] *Ibid*.

priests. The archbishop also advised that parents should marry their children to pure *indios*, *españoles* or *castizos* (the offspring of a Spaniard and a *mestizo*); he thought that individuals with a more "confusing" background "disturb[ed] the peace in their pueblos," and instructed that natives who married them would lose their legal privileges.[73]

With these rules, Lorenzana sought to convince *indios* to live more like Spaniards, adhering to the customs he considered "decent" and "rational." He also sought to ensure their productivity by dissuading them from drinking in excess, and encouraging them to procure resources. Finally, he hoped that, by asking *caciques* to act respectably, ordering *gobernadores* to punish excesses, and demanding that residents obey their superiors (including parish priests), he could instill a respect for hierarchy and law that would improve order and efficiency.

If natives were to live like Spaniards, they would need to speak and write like them as well, in order to further their education and general improvement. Lorenzana argued that indigenous peoples' limited knowledge of Spanish hindered their education. He lamented that, in school, "they memorize more than they conserve and retain…"[74] Thus, the archbishop's list of rules stated that natives should learn to read, write and speak Spanish. Rule I stated that natives should "know Christian doctrine, not only in their language, but principally in Spanish…"[75] With Rule IX, the prelate ordered that each town should "have a Spanish school, and children should learn to read and

[73] *Ibid*.
[74] Lorenzana, Carta Pastoral V.
[75] Lorenzana, "Exhortacion."

write…"[76] Learning Spanish would ensure that indigenous peoples learned as much as possible from their schooling.

Knowing Spanish would lead to more effective education, which, in turn, would lead to better native citizens with more refined customs. By learning Spanish and thus learning more in school, Lorenzana thought that indigenous peoples "[would] move forward, know how to clean their homes, [could] become *república* officials, and explain themselves to officials…" If they accomplished these tasks, they would be "enriching their nation and banishing their ignorance, not only of the mysteries of the faith, but also of how to cultivate their lands, raise cattle, and trade their goods…"[77] Learning Spanish would also help indigenous peoples learn to respect authority figures. Lorenzana thought that, when natives spoke their own languages with or in front of their superiors, this betrayed a lack of respect, since (he believed) these communications could easily have occurred in Spanish instead. Even if natives' knowledge of Spanish was limited, speaking a little Spanish was preferable to speaking a lot of an indigenous language.[78] Lorenzana believed not only that learning Christian doctrine in Spanish would lead to a better understanding of Christianity, but also that—like Christian doctrine—the Spanish language could serve as a path to better customs, more productivity, more respect for hierarchy and superiors, and overall better citizens.

Learning Spanish would also help natives leave behind the inherent "backwardness" of their own languages. Lorenzana posited that the supposedly savage

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[76] *Ibid*.
[77] *Ibid*.
[78] *Ibid*.

nature of indigenous peoples was reflected in their languages, and that using these tongues thus inhibited native development. He suggested that all "barbarous" peoples also had "barbarous" languages: "…just as a nation was barbarous, so too was, and is, its language…"[79] Languages like Nahuatl could not possibly be comparable to Hebrew, the language Adam had spoken; Greek, which had been "such an elegant language"; or Latin, into which "all the sacred books are translated…"[80] He pointed out that the Greeks had extinguished Hebrew, and then the Romans had put an end to Greek. Given that these conquered peoples' "more learned" languages had been allowed to disappear, "why," he asked, "should that of the Indians be sustained?"[81]

Fabián y Fuero held a similar, if perhaps somewhat harsher, belief. He argued in his 1769 pastoral letter that the languages of New Spain's native subjects were "barbarous, poor and unclear." Moreover, he thought these tongues sounded more like "howls, whistles, bleats and bellows of beasts than the articulation of rational people…" Fabián y Fuero attributed these qualities to every single indigenous language in New Spain: "among all the languages of the natives, even including Nahuatl, which is the most abundant, there are none that one could call sensible, or which are needed by the literary republic or the common good."[82]

Yet like Lorenzana, Fabián y Fuero saw indigenous peoples themselves as redeemable. He, too, thought Hispanization was critical for natives' assimilation into

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[79] Lorenzana, Carta Pastoral V.
[80] *Ibid*.
[81] *Ibid*.
[82] Tanck de Estrada, *Pueblos de indios y educación*, 172.

society and, thus, for their improvement. He argued in his 1769 pastoral letter that the persistence of native languages caused indigenous peoples to be "less educated, not only in civil matters, but also in Christian doctrine…" As a result, he thought, natives frequently saw themselves "as separate from the other vassals."[83] Lorenzana and Fabián y Fuero alike believed that if indigenous peoples were to achieve their full potential, they would need to leave behind their "barbarous" languages; consequently, learning Spanish would pave the way to better education and, in time, better customs and citizenry. By virtue of their barbaric nature, indigenous languages could only hold natives back.

These two prelates were hardly alone in their belief that indigenous peoples had the capacity—with a little help—to become full-fledged human beings and good citizens. This belief was becoming increasingly common in the 18th century, not only among Spaniards and Spanish Americans, but also throughout the Western world in general. Thomas Jefferson, for instance, included the famous "Logan's Lament" in his *Notes on the State of Virginia* as an example of indigenous eloquence.[84] Jefferson praised natives for their intelligence and argued that their "savagery" was a product not of their own inferiority, but of historical and environmental circumstances. Thus was his mission to "civilize" America's indigenous peoples: given their capacity to become "civilized," he thought it unnecessary for them to remain Indian and, therefore, "savage."[85] By the time Lorenzana wrote his pro-Hispanization pastoral letters in the late 1760s and early 1770s,

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[83] *Ibid*., 172.
[84] Logan's Lament was a speech by the Native American leader Tachnedorus (John Logan), addressed to the governor of Virginia during the signing of a treaty.
[85] Anthony F.C. Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians: The Tragic Fate of the First Americans* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 11.

it had become commonplace among Enlightenment intellectuals and politicians to see indigenous peoples as inherently corrupted, but ultimately redeemable. In these men's eyes, a little guidance, a good education and a linguistic shift could integrate natives into society as full-fledged citizens.

## INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES AND CULTURES AS OBJECTS OF STUDY

Along with the archbishop's optimistic vision for New Spain's *indios* came a special interest in pre-Hispanic indigenous culture. As Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra points out, like many of his contemporaries, Lorenzana collected, studied and printed various indigenous sources.[86] In 1770, he published a new edition of Hernán Cortés's *Historia de Nueva España* (History of New Spain), a series of the *conquistador*'s writings from the 16th century. Lorenzana added substantial introductions, notes and annotations to his version of Cortés's work. These additions not only lauded Cortés's successful conquest, but also included in-depth descriptions of pre-Hispanic society, political structure and culture. Lorenzana explained that he had included these descriptions to help readers understand references to indigenous peoples in Cortés's work, but the extensive detail in his descriptions indicates a deep interest in the subject matter that also inspired these additions. At the beginning of the publication, the archbishop described Mexico's indigenous peoples' religious traditions, art and clothing, the Aztec tribute system, and the kinds of paper they used. He also told the story of the origins of the Mexica people,

[86] Jorge Cañizares Esguerra, *How to Write the History of the New World: Histories, Epistemologies, and Identities in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 234.

listed the emperors of the Aztecs in chronological order, explained the calendar system, and even included an image of the cyclical Aztec calendar. However, the prelate did not include any images of religious figures, since he felt that these "figures and idols are horrible and ridiculous."[87]

As part of this re-publication of Cortés's writings, Lorenzana also included a copy of a 16th-century Aztec tribute roll collected by the Italian antiquarian Lorenzo Boturini Benaduci, which depicted the tributes various towns had paid to the Aztec emperor. Along with numerous images of the document, Lorenzana described its paint colors, pictographic system and imagery, and commented on the amounts and types of tributes paid. He noted that he had analyzed the fragmented map "with the utmost pleasure, since in these fragments one sees the most authentic testimony of the opulence, grandeur and majesty of this Mexican [Aztec] Empire…"[88] Although he disliked the idolatry he saw in their spiritual traditions, Lorenzana clearly admired nearly every other component of Mexica culture and political life.

Lorenzana's edition of *Historia de Nueva España* also reveals that he admired scholars of all kinds—including those who studied Nahuatl and the Aztec past. After describing the aforementioned tribute roll, the archbishop thanked numerous friends and colleagues for assisting him with his translations and analysis of the document: Bishop Fabián y Fuero; Carlos de Tapia Zenteno, a professor of Nahuatl, parish priest, and expert in the Huastec language; Domingo Joseph de la Mota, an indigenous cacique and parish

[87] Lorenzana, *Historia de Nueva España*.
[88] *Ibid*.

priest who spoke Nahuatl; Luis de Neve y Molina, a professor of Otomi; and Gerónimo Camps, a Dominican friar who served as an ecclesiastical examiner. He made clear his admiration for all these men's talents. For instance, he praised Fabían y Fuero's scientific expertise and his "such lively astuteness."[89] The archbishop described Tapia as "venerable" and a "person of virtue," and praised him for his knowledge of Huastec, as well as the grammars he had published for both Huastec and Nahuatl.[90] Lorenzana clearly admired intellectual minds of many persuasions; whether their expertise focused on theology, indigenous cultures or languages seems to have made little difference to him. Nor, apparently, did the fact that Domingo Joseph de la Mota was indigenous. Perhaps his noble status as a *cacique* made him worthy in Lorenzana's mind, or perhaps it was his linguistic expertise.

Lorenzana's admiration for the Nahuatl language itself is equally surprising. At the beginning of his edition of *Historia de Nueva España*, Lorenzana explained some of the history of Nahuatl, describing the language as "very elegant [and] sweet." He also noted that it was "abundant in phrases and compositions"—a sentiment shared, he said, by "all those who have learned [the language] and fathomed its meanings."[91] Lorenzana's praise for both Nahuatl and its experts indicates that, despite his proclamations in other places that native languages were inferior to many others, he did not see indigenous languages as inherently negative. Rather, such was the case only when they were spoken by contemporary indigenous peoples. When studied by revered intellectuals or spoken by

[89] *Ibid*.
[90] *Ibid*.
[91] *Ibid*.

the Aztecs of the past, he considered Nahuatl a beautiful, elegant language, and the ability to speak it a sign of great learning or imperial glory.

The archbishop was but one of numerous Spanish and Spanish American intellectuals in the 18th century who were fascinated by indigenous peoples and by their languages in particular. Cañizares and David Brading have demonstrated that many creoles, Spaniards, and other southern Europeans were deeply interested in these topics during the 18th century, and valued codices and other indigenous antiquities as important sources of historical knowledge. They also used these sources to prove Spanish America's uniqueness and craft historical narratives that legitimated creole patriotism.[92] For instance, Francisco Xavier Clavijero, a creole Jesuit exiled from Spanish America when his order was expelled in 1767, used indigenous sources extensively in his scholarship, sometimes relying upon them to craft histories that refuted dominant historical narratives—an approach that Cañizares calls "patriotic epistemology." Clavijero and other Spanish and Creole intellectuals also criticized foreigners' attempts to study the history of Spanish America based in part on their limited knowledge of indigenous languages. In doing so, these scholars suggested that to know native tongues was to know Spanish America; their histories could not be separated.[93]

The production of grammars for native languages in Spain and Spanish America reflects this increased interest in languages in the 18th century. By the end of the 16th century, Spanish Americans had written grammatical manuals for 33 native languages.

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[92] D. A. Brading, *The Origins of Mexican Nationalism* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, Centre of Latin American Studies, 1985) and Cañizares, *How to Write the History of the New World*.
[93] Cañizares, *How to Write the History of the New World*, 188-207 and 246.

The count was up to 86 languages by the end of the 17th century. By the end of the 18th century, the number of grammatized Amerindian languages had nearly doubled, reaching 158.[94] While most of these manuals likely emerged in large part from priests' need to spread the faith and, thus, to communicate with their parishioners, the Enlightenment interest in language helps to explain the dramatic surge in such publications in the 18th century.

The Spanish and Spanish American fascination with indigenous languages and cultures during the Enlightenment to some extent reflected broader trends in the West at that time. Many European scholars in the 18th century became interested in the emergence of language, and sought to study this in a secular and scientific fashion, particularly by studying the vocabularies and grammatical structures of a variety of languages from around the world.[95] Thomas R. Trautmann refers to this phenomenon as the "explosion in the grammar factory." He argues that, during this time (and up until the biologization of race in the mid-19th century), Europeans saw languages and nations/peoples as inextricably connected; in other words, they believed that languages should be classified in the same way as peoples. Therefore, 18th-century scholars saw language as a useful tool for ethnology. Indeed, Trautmann attributes the rise of European Orientalism during the Enlightenment in part to this notion that languages reflected the

[94] Sylvain Auroux, "The Origin of Language as Seen by Eighteenth-Century Philosophy," in *New Perspectives on the Origins of Language*, eds. Claire Lefebvre, Bernard Comrie and Henri Cohen (Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing, 2013), 31-40.
[95] *Ibid*., 31.

characteristics of their peoples.[96] To understand the world's languages was to understand its peoples, and the differences between them.

Some of the Enlightenment's most notable historical personalities participated in this rush to collect grammars of a variety of languages. Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz, for instance, had a special interest in languages; he believed that "nothing throws greater light indicating the ancient origins of peoples than the collation of languages…"[97] Leibniz developed a list of words whose translations he sought in other tongues, believing that the terms used to express these particular ideas could reveal characteristics of various peoples. He hoped to map out the entire history of Eurasia by way of language and, in doing so, demonstrate Germany's place in that history. He saw his list of basic terms as the key to this project. Leibniz's word-list method quickly became a trend among scholars worldwide who sought ethnological knowledge by way of linguistic study.[98]

Just as scholars followed the lead of intellectuals like Leibniz, so too did various 18th-century political leaders. Thomas Jefferson, for instance, was deeply interested in languages. He spoke Greek, Latin, Italian, Spanish and French, studied a variety of others, and was fascinated with Old English.[99] Moreover, Jefferson was obsessed with ascertaining the origins of Native Americans, and sought to achieve this in large part by studying their languages. He hoped that by comparing vocabulary lists from the

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[96] Thomas R. Trautmann, *Languages & Nations: The Dravidian Proof in Colonial Madras* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).
[97] *Ibid*., 32.
[98] *Ibid*., 31-33.
[99] Stanley R. Hauer, "Thomas Jefferson and the Anglo-Saxon Language," *PMLA* 98:5 (1983), 879.

languages of America and Asia, he could determine whether people of color from the two continents shared a common origin. His methods bore some similarity to that of Leibniz: he compiled a list of 250 English words—different terms from those on Leibniz's list—and sought their translation into other tongues for comparison.[100]

Catherine the Great of Russia also expressed considerable interest in linguistic knowledge. While still Grand Duchess, she formulated a plan to craft a universal dictionary: a list of words translated into as many languages as possible. Catherine created a list of about 200 Russian words using Leibniz's method and, once she was Empress, she set out to find translations for these terms for every language spoken in her vast empire. She also sought knowledge of languages beyond Russia, and took advantage of close diplomatic ties with Spain to help her with this project. In 1785, the Russian Empress had an acting minister draw up a letter to King Charles III, requesting information about the languages of Spanish America. He also included a list of books on American languages, Japanese, and the languages spoken in the Philippines, which Catherine hoped the King could find for her. Charles III forwarded the request on to his viceroys.[101]

Although it seems not all the information made it to the Empress, her request was probably at least partially successful: housed in the Archivo General de la Nación in Mexico is a copy of the list of books that Catherine requested, dated 1787, as well as a

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[100] Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians*, 144-151.

[101] Consuelo Larrucea de Tovar, "José Celestino Mutis (1732-1808) and the report on American languages ordered by Charles III of Spain for Catherine the Great of Russia" in *The History of Linguistics in Spain*, eds. Antonio Quilis Morales and Hans-Josef Hiederehe (Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing, 1986), 213-216 and Trautmann, *Languages & Nations*, 37.

list of Spanish words—presumably, Spanish translations of the 200-term vocabulary list prepared by the Empress. It is unclear how many of these books actually made it to Russia, but she probably at least received the list of Spanish vocabulary.[102] Catherine may also have eventually had some success obtaining grammars, given that she seems to have cast her net widely: an 1872 article in a South American history periodical, *Revista del Río de la Plata*, suggests that the Empress sent the same request to George Washington and the King of Portugal.[103]

The 18th-century "explosion in the grammar factory" and intellectuals' interest in foreign tongues should not be construed as indicative of respect for the speakers of these suddenly much-studied languages. As mentioned, this trend helped forge orientalism among Europeans, and individuals like Jefferson were hardly kind to indigenous populations. As Anthony Wallace argues, "the Jeffersonian vision of the destiny of the Americas had no place for Indians as Indians."[104] Similarly, Lorenzana's interest in Mexico's native cultures and languages was not indicative of respect for the customs of the native parishioners under his care. In his mind—as in many "Enlightened" minds of the time—the Aztec Empire and revered experts on native languages were admirable, but the indigenous masses were not. If anything, the glory of the indigenous past and the intellectual prowess of linguists who studied native tongues proved to Lorenzana that,

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[102] The list of 15 books the Empress requested includes Andrés de Olmos's Dictionary and Grammar of the Mexican [Nahuatl] Language;, a grammar of Timucua (a native language of Florida), by the Franciscan Francisco Pareja;, an Aymara grammar by Ludovico Bertonio (misspelled "Bertorio" on the list), and grammars for Tagalog, Japanese, and more. AGN, Bandos Vol. 14, exp. 129-130.
[103] Andrés Lamas, "Las Lenguas Americanas y Catalina II de Rusia," *Revista del Río de la Plata*, 22 February 1872, pp. 301-308.
[104] Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians*, 11.

while natives had the capacity to be full-capable humans, they were not currently in that state. He believed that their languages and cultural patrimony were not inherently inferior; however, natives' "Indianness" and inability to speak Spanish were holding them back. The archbishop's interest in native languages and cultures was borne of a desire to change indigenous peoples, not to admire and respect them as they were.

## CLERICAL REFORM

In order to help indigenous peoples achieve their potential, Lorenzana believed the clergy would need to be reformed, to ensure that only the best clerics were influencing the supposedly impressionable minds of the *indios*. He thought that first and foremost, clerics needed to be well-educated. In his first pastoral letter in 1766, Lorenzana stated his plan to make the process of ordaining clergymen more selective and competitive, to provide parishioners with better administration and teaching. He wrote that he sought "not to ordain many, but for those who are ordained... to be useful to the Church, and capable of teaching the people..."[105] He hoped to prevent "people of little merit [and] limited knowledge [*ciencia*]" from becoming priests. By limiting ordinations and ordaining based primarily on education, Lorenzana sought to ensure that priests were "respected, loved by the people, and that they are Pastors, who do not gratify only themselves, but also their flocks, for whose benefit they are ordained."[106]

[105] Lorenzana, Carta Pastoral I (1766).
[106] *Ibid*.

The Fourth Provincial Mexican Council's decrees reflected Lorenzana's desire to ensure that his clergymen were well-educated. For instance, the Council ordered that bishops must only ordain individuals who had sufficient "*literatura*" (literature, or learning) and "integrity of customs" to be able to cure their parishioners' spiritual ailments, teach them Christian doctrine, and lead by example with good Christian conduct. Here, the Council (and perhaps Lorenzana) linked education with moral integrity, as if one were not possible without the other.[107]

Just as the archbishop's views on indigenous peoples reflected intellectual trends at the time, his emphasis on priests' education was also indicative of broader contemporary ideas about how the clergy should operate. Although education had always been an important component of a priest's career, ecclesiastics believed it to be increasingly critical starting in the mid-18th century. Prior to that time, other aspects of a clergyman's life and career could make up for an unimpressive academic record. In his 1663 manual for parish priests, Montenegro explained that a cleric's "*ciencia*" (knowledge/skill) alone could not prove his worthiness; if a priest was prudent and a "giant in virtue," then these qualities should count for more than *ciencia*.[108] Moreover, in 1742 the Pope stated that "the most learned is not necessarily the most suited to the examination of souls."[109]

However, as new ideologies of governance emerged in the mid-18th century, so too did new conceptions of the clergy's role in parish life. As William Taylor argues in

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[107] Concilio IV, Libro I, Título V, "De las elecciones," Paragraph 1.
[108] Montenegro, *Itinerario*, Libro I, Tratado I, Session II, Num. 17.
[109] Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred*, 575 n. 20.

*Magistrates of the Sacred*, in the 18th century New Spain's ecclesiastics became increasingly likely to envision *curas* as teachers, rather than as judges and keepers of public morality as in previous centuries. Reformist prelates and officials armed parish priests with less judicial authority, but more responsibility for gentle, loving spiritual instruction. Many contended that what indigenous peoples needed most from their clerics was gentle guidance, not punishment.[110] For example, in 1806, the archbishop's inspector to the Huasteca region (in the eastern part of central Mexico, in what is now Veracruz and Hidalgo) urged the *curas* he visited to consider that their indigenous parishioners were in a state of spiritual illness. Therefore, he needed ministrations to that illness rather than harsh discipline. Similarly, in his 1766 guide for parish assistants in the diocese of Guadalajara, Father Pérez de Velasco posited that it was the pastor's obligation "to win over the wills of men in order to bring them to peace with God… We should not consider them [Indians] to be more brutish or fierce than tigers, for we can see how they become gentle, domesticated, and tractable (but by persuasion, not force)…"[111] In other words, because—as many believed at the time—indigenous peoples could become full adult humans provided they received the right guidance, a priest's job was to persuade them to improve by way of gentle, loving care. Judgment and punishment were for savage animals, not gentle *indios* who were filled with human potential.

This new conception of parish priests' duties as gentle and loving instead of harsh and judging went hand-in-hand with a newfound focus on priests' education. Around the

[110] Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred*.
[111] *Ibid*., 170. Translation his.

middle of the century, many prelates in New Spain began to see the model parish priest as "not only charitable, patient, obedient, and the rest, but also learned."[112] For example, in 1785, the bishop of Michoacán and his advisers decided that the "grave duty of instruction" was so important that they would grant the best parish appointments to *curas* who had excellent academic records. Granting learning even more significance, Archbishop Lizana y Beaumont referred to learning as the "science of the saints." Similarly, in a 1772 circular to priests, Lorenzana's successor, Archbishop Alonso Nuñez de Haro y Peralta, ordered clerics to punish parishioners when necessary, but to do so with love and moderation. He also highlighted the need for *curas* to educate children and establish Spanish language schools.[113] As Taylor contends, to ecclesiastical authorities in the 18th century, "merit increasingly meant learning…"[114]

Like Lorenzana, some other ecclesiastical authorities in New Spain complained that parish priests were insufficiently educated to perform their important roles. For instance, in a 1758 report on the state of his clergy, Lorenzana's predecessor Rubio y Salinas complained that many of the archbishopric's parish priests were of limited learning. He lamented that although most entered the priesthood with a decent education, their theological prowess often faded after a few years of service in parishes outside the capital:

> These same men undergo two examinations in order to become *curas*, one in matters of moral theology and the other in an Indian language. This happens every time they try for a new parish. But there is little civility in most parishes, because

[112] *Ibid*., 169-170.
[113] *Ibid*., 161-162.
[114] *Ibid*., 575 n. 20.

> the local people are so unrefined. Accordingly, even if the priests are very capable at first examination, their competence declines considerably thereafter. I have verified this by testing the competence of the *curas* and *vicarios* during six long journeys on *visita* [pastoral visit].[115]

The archbishop believed that this high concentration of unlearned parish priests was "impracticable," given that the diocese had a severe overabundance of clergymen:

> …This city has nearly one thousand secular priests ordained *a título de capellanía*, and almost as many in all of the diocese, employed as *vicarios*, and serving as chaplains on *haciendas* with those who are retired and managing their own estates; since here we are lacking other posts for ecclesiastics who are not *curas* or *vicarios*, or who feed themselves with their own *capellanías* or those of nuns' convents, or depend completely on alms from masses…[116]

The problem was so dire that, according to Rubio y Salinas, a current competition for 21 benefices—of which only 15 were even remotely desirable—had over 200 applicants. "I think," he posited, "that if there was a higher number of vacancies, there would be as many as 300 candidates." Even worse, Rubio y Salinas could not foresee relief from this oversupply of priests anytime soon: each of the capital's five colleges had an increasing number of students, "from which one can infer how great [the number] is of those who aspire to the ecclesiastical state."[117] Given the archbishopric's abundance of clergymen,

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115 *Ibid*.. Translation his.

116 AGI, México 2549, Report from Archbishop Rubio y Salinas, Oct 8, 1758.

117 *Ibid*. Rubio y Salinas was not exaggerating the Archbishopric's oversupply of clergymen. Throughout the 18th century and into the early 19th, benefice competitions received far more applications than there were positions available. A 1709 competition for 23 benefices received 105 applications; in 1768, 83 priests applied for a mere seven benefices; and in 1796, 173 priests competed for 13 parishes. Fewer clerics applied for a 1749 competition—only 33 applied for the nine available benefices—but this was probably unsurprising, given that most of the benefices offered that year were undesirable. The fact that benefice competitions normally received far more applications than there were available benefices owes in part to the nature of these competitions. Many of the priests who acquired a new benefice would leave behind an old one, which would in turn need to be filled. The archbishop and his examiners would keep running the competition—often going through two or three "provisions," rather than just one—until no benefices were left unfilled. As a result, priests who submitted applications were in reality applying for more positions than

Rubio y Salinas saw no reason why the benefices should go to undereducated and underqualified candidates.

Although the aforementioned prelates all believed parish priests should be learned, Lorenzana may have been the first to link this priority directly to Hispanization. In his 1769 Fifth Pastoral Letter he argued that if all indigenous peoples could speak Spanish, then he would be able to ordain more qualified men as parish priests. At the moment, he thought, the process of selecting candidates "is subject more to the languages the ministers speak than to the suitability of their persons…"[118] He also contended that, in order to stave off secularization, friars had argued that secular priests did not know native languages. Now that secular clerics *did* know these tongues, however, they stubbornly aided the persistence of native tongues, "believing… that these secure their comfort with fewer letters."[119] In other words, according to Lorenzana, *lengua* priests believed that their linguistic knowledge alone assured them a benefice and a comfortable living, and thus they had no need to be learned theologians. *Lengua* priests, then, were the problem: by relying solely on their language skills, these clerics were effectively stealing benefices from better-educated candidates.

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just the few that were advertised. In spite of these additional "provisions," however, Rubio y Salinas was right: the available benefices could not possibly accommodate every priest in the archbishopric—especially those who sought the most comfortable and profitable posts. David Brading's work demonstrates that the Diocese of Michoacán suffered a similar glut of priests in the 18th century, many of whom were undereducated and/or had no parish assignment. AGN, BN 338, exp. 2 (1709); AGN, BN 199, exp. 12 (1749); AGN, BN 603, exp. 5 (1768); AGN, BN 577, exp. 1 (1796); and Brading, *Church and State in Bourbon Mexico*, 105-113.

[118] Lorenzana, Carta Pastoral V.

[119] *Ibid*.

Lorenzana believed good parish priests should not only be well educated, but also relatively wealthy—or, at least, not so poor that they could not support themselves. His first pastoral letter ordered that, in order to become ordained, would-be priests had to be able to prove that they had enough funds to support themselves during their parish work. Much like education, Lorenzana linked priests' financial support with Hispanization. The archbishop believed that the proliferation of indigenous languages not only led officials to grant benefices to insufficiently wealthy clerics—it also created a financial burden for priests who already had parish positions. He argued in his Fifth Pastoral Letter that the archbishopric's many languages engendered "a high cost for parish priests, who in their own districts need [to employ] ministers who speak various languages…" That is, many parish priests had to devote much of their salaries to pay *vicarios* to serve as translators. As discussed in Chapter One, *curas* had to pay *vicarios* out of their own pockets. This could be a significant expense, as it must have been necessary in some cases to employ multiple *vicarios* to provide spiritual guidance in multiple different languages. Lorenzana explained that, even in the immediate vicinity of Mexico City, parishioners spoke so many languages that priests often had to employ multiple *vicarios* to serve them all: "At a short distance of three leagues from Mexico [City] is Tlanepantla, and a little further, Cuautitlan, which must have ministers who speak Spanish, Nahuatl and Otomi."[120] Assuming *curas* themselves could not possibly know so many languages themselves, Lorenzana was concerned that employing more than one *vicario* to serve indigenous

[120] *Ibid*.

parishioners could be very expensive for *curas*. He worried that, in many cases, the need to pay *vicarios* was what led beneficed priests to have to beg for money to get by.

According to Lorenzana, *título de idioma* priests in particular tended to be too poor and undereducated to serve indigenous peoples properly. As demonstrated in Chapter One, this belief was common among churchmen throughout the 18th century. In his fifth pastoral letter the archbishop expressed his concern that communicating the tenets of the faith properly was difficult even for "very well-educated" men. He asked how "some *vicario* clerics ordained *a título de idioma*," who had studied little more than a bit of grammar and a single theological manual, could possibly explain the most complex principles of the faith "in Nahuatl, in Otomi, Huastec, Totonac, Mazahua, Tepehua, Zapotec, Tarascan, and innumerable other [languages]…?"[121] Lorenzana thought this theological ineptitude among *título de idioma* priests almost inevitably led to poverty. In his first pastoral letter he argued that, most such priests were "without merit," and thus "we see many clerics begging, ordained only *a título de idioma*."[122] Consequently rather than ordaining clerics *a título de idioma*, it would be better to do so *a título de administración*—by appointment as a *vicario*.[123] Any manner of ordination was preferable to *título de idioma*, since clerics ordained this way were all too likely to beg for a living and misunderstand complex theology.

The writings of Fabián y Fuero and the decrees of the Fourth Provincial Mexican Council both reflected Lorenzana's distaste for clergymen ordained by right of language.

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[121] *Ibid*.
[122] Lorenzana, Carta Pastoral I.
[123] Lorenzana, Carta Pastoral V.

In his 1769 pastoral letter, Fabián y Fuero pushed not only for Hispanization, but also for new and better ways of ordaining clergymen. As part of the letter, he notified men born in his diocese of Puebla that the elimination of native languages should not stop them from seeking ordination and joining the priesthood. Now, he said, they could become clerics based on their general knowledge, and not on their command of a native tongue.[124] Similarly, the decrees of the Fourth Provincial Mexican Council stated that priests ordained *a título de idioma* were inherently too poor and undereducated to be good parish priests. One of the Council's orders complained that numerous clerics ordained in this matter could be seen begging on a regular basis, lacking any other means for financial sustenance. To correct this problem, the Council repeated an order from the Third Mexican Provincial Council, which stated that bishops should only ordain men with good "customs, *suficiencia* and *literatura*."[125]

In sum, according to the reformist prelates of Mexico and Puebla, *lengua* priests—and especially those ordained by right of language—were simply incompatible with clerical reform. Their reputation as undereducated, impoverished, overabundant, and lacking good customs made them the antithesis of everything Lorenzana and Fabián y Fuero sought in a well-respected clergy. If more parishioners could speak Spanish, then prelates would no longer have to rely on these underachieving *lengua* priests to instruct indigenous peoples. Hispanization meant a wealthier and more learned clergy, which meant a better, less "Indian" flock.

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[124] Tanck de Estrada, *Pueblos de indios y educación*, 173.
[125] Concilio IV, Libro I, Título IV, "De la edad y calidades de los que se han de ordenar y del escrutinio que se ha de hacer," Paragraph 8.

## BEYOND THE THREE REFORMERS

Were the Hispanizing impulses of Lorenzana and Fabián y Fuero and others discussed in this chapter popular beyond this small circle of reformists? Although these men were in many ways a product of their time, support for Hispanization was far from inevitable. Indeed, many of their contemporaries disagreed with their approach to language policy. The Fourth Provincial Mexican Council, for instance, did not call for the outright elimination of New Spain's indigenous languages, despite the deep involvement of Lorenzana and Fabián y Fuero in its sessions. Dorothy Tanck de Estrada has hypothesized that this was because Antonio Joaquín de Rivadeneyra y Barrientos, an *oidor* of the *Audiencia* and *asistente real* (royal assistant) who disagreed with Lorenzana's approach to Hispanization, was involved in the formulation of the Council's decrees.[126] His involvement was also the source of some controversy about royal intervention in the Fourth Council; as a result neither the Crown nor the Church ever approved its decrees for publication, and they never became legally binding.[127]

Rivadeneyra intervened regularly in the Council's decision-making, and wrote numerous reports—some to the Council, some to the king—detailing his opinions on the subjects the Council tackled during its policymaking sessions. One of these reports to Charles III took issue with the stance that Lorenzana, Fabián y Fuero, the Fourth Council, and the king himself had taken regarding indigenous languages. Rivadeneyra agreed with Lorenzana and others that a nation should spread its languages to the peoples it has

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[126] Tanck de Estrada, *Pueblos de indios y educación*, 186.
[127] Brading, *The First America*, 496 and José Luis Soberanes Fernández, "Vida y obra de Rivadeneyra." *Anuario Mexicano de Historia del Derecho* 7 (1995), 234.

conquered. However, he disagreed with two aspects of the recent decrees on the issue. First, Rivadeneyra argued that it was impossible for all indigenous peoples to learn Spanish within a mere four years, as Fabián y Fuero had ordered them to do in a 1770 edict. Second, he believed it was of little use—and could even be harmful—to try to eliminate indigenous languages. He contended that, "with schools and time, the *indios* will learn the Spanish language, but taking away their own [language] is not possible nor advisable."[128]

Rivadeneyra reasoned that it was entirely natural for a people to love its own language, and indigenous peoples were no exception. Therefore, natives would "hate the administration of the sacraments if their languages were prohibited."[129] He cited the example of an indigenous man in Puebla who knew Spanish, but would only confess in his native tongue, Chocho. "To extinguish the Indian language is to extinguish the language of parish priests and the sacraments, with detriment to souls," he wrote.[130] Rivadeneyra pointed out that many indigenous peoples—especially in the major cities—spoke Spanish, and, little by little, this was becoming more common. Since the language was spreading, why risk the possibility of spiritual degradation by extirpating the traditional medium of Catholic instruction? Moreover  Rivadeneyra argued that Spain had successfully imposed its language many times before without having to eliminate the tongues of the conquered. Castille had dominated the peoples of the Iberian peninsula for

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[128] Antonio Joaquín de Rivadeneyra y Barrientos, "Disertación Séptima: Sobre la necesidad que hay de haberse de enseñar y predicar a los indios en su propio idioma la doctrina y el santo sacramento de la penitencia," in Zahino Peñafort, *Cardenal Lorenzana y el IV Concilio*, 862.
[129] *Ibid*., 861.
[130] *Ibid*.

centuries, spreading Castilian while still allowing languages like Portuguese, Galician, Aragonese and Catalan to persist. Rivadeneyra pointed out that, in Iberia, it was normal for priests to conduct the sacraments in the local language, rather than in Castilian.[131]

Rivadeneyra also challenged the common notion that native languages could not properly communicate the tenets of Christianity—and, in particular, Lorenzana's contention that it was improper for *indios* to refer to the host as the "consecrated tortilla." Since indigenous peoples "do not know any other bread than the tortilla," thought Rivadeneyra, it made sense for them to call the host by this name; he felt this was acceptable so long as a cleric informed them that the Eucharist is supposed to be made of wheat.[132] He noted that Spaniards and others had done the same, translating the Greek word for "bread" into Latin, Spanish and other European languages—he saw no reason why native tongues should be any different. He did have one caveat, however: he noted that the mysteries of the Catholic faith could be communicated, "at least in Nahuatl." Yet, Rivadeneyra did not specify whether he believed the same regarding other native tongues. Indeed, his wording suggests that he might have thought Otomi, Mazahua and other such languages were lesser than Nahuatl.[133]

Rivadeneyra's opposition to full-on Hispanization might have owed in part to his personal and professional background. Unlike Lorenzana, Fabián y Fuero and their colleagues, the *oidor* was born in New Spain, and spent most of his life there. Much like these pro-Hispanization reformers, Rivadeneyra was well-known as a regalist, meaning

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[131] *Ibid*., 860-861.
[132] *Ibid*., 861.
[133] *Ibid*. See Brading, *The First America*, 497 for further discussion of Rivadeneyra's defense of the use of native languages in pastoral administration.

he supported subjecting the Church to Crown authority. However, Rivadeneyra was probably much more familiar with the specifics of life in the viceroyalty than were his peninsular colleagues. Indeed, he authored a widely respected legal manual about the *Real Patronato* that addressed this church-state agreement from the American perspective. Moreover, Rivadeneyra had previously worked for the *Audiencia* as an *abogado de pobres* (a Crown-appointed official who represented the poor in formal litigation free of charge), and as a *protector de indios* (the same position, but for indigenous peoples).[134] Given these experiences, Rivadeneyra would have had significantly more direct interaction with New Spain's natives than did Lorenzana, Fabián y Fuero or the Marquis de Croix. The *oidor* shared these men's reformist impulses in general, but not their calls for Hispanization; his more flexible approach to language policy likely owed to his more intimate understanding of the workings of a viceroyalty and its natives.

The Marquis de Croix's successor, Viceroy Antonio Maria Bucareli, also appears to have disagreed with Lorenzana's ideas regarding Hispanization, and thought it impossible to implement orders on the matter. Once Bucareli took office in September 1771, it was his responsibility to carry out the 1770 decree from Charles III to impose Spanish in New Spain's parishes—a law I discuss further below. Rather than simply following orders, however, Bucareli chose to slow down the implementation of the reform as much as possible by asking *alcaldes* and town councilmen to conduct surveys in 1772. He ordered these local officials to count the number of school-aged children in

[134] Soberanes Fernández, "Vida y Obra de Rivadeneyra," 222-229.

each pueblo; inspect the records of community properties; calculate the appropriate salary for a teacher based on community wealth; establish a curriculum for Spanish, Christian doctrine, reading and writing; and collect taxes if community funds could not support a teacher's salary. The viceroy made no other moves to either resist or comply with Hispanization orders, but these actions suggest that he did not agree with Lorenzana's approach.[135]

There is evidence that some ecclesiastics agreed with Lorenzana's approach to language policy, however. A notable example is Ignacio José Hugo de Omerick, a parish priest who worked in Tepecoacuilco, Guerrero and wrote a practical guide for his fellow *curas* in 1769, titled "Friendly Conversations between a *Cura* and his Indian Parishioners..." The guide told clerics how to implement Lorenzana's previously-mentioned "Rules for ensuring that the natives of these kingdoms are spiritually and temporally happy." Omerick would go on to serve as a prebendary—and, later, canon—of the Nahuatl language at the Collegiate Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe in the 1770s and 1780s (I discuss his participation in its language policy struggles in Chapter Five). Although never published, his guide for parish priests shows that at least one influential cleric supported Hispanization and Lorenzana's other reform measures.

In Lorenzana's special rules for indigenous peoples, Omerick saw "the entire heart and substance of national prosperity."[136] Like Lorenzana, Omerick believed natives required improvement, and that they could only achieve this with the help of parish

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[135] Heath, *Telling Tongues*, 50-51.

[136] Ignacio Hugo de Omerick, "Conversaciones familiares de un Cura a sus Feligreses Yndios..." Bancroft MSS M-M 113, fs. 14-15. Referred to hereafter as "Conversaciones familiares."

priests. He thought the ideal indigenous parishioner should be "well-instructed, docile, and dedicated to the divine cult and their work."[137] If *indios* were ignorant, it was clerics' fault for failing them. In the prologue of his manual, he asked *curas* to put aside their prejudices and treat their native parishioners "familiarly as a brother, relative and companion..." Doing so, he assured them, would in no way "reduce your noble birth, your imminent status, your relevant education, or your other outstanding qualifications..."[138] Only by mingling with natives and speaking to them as equals, he thought, could clerics helps indigenous peoples to reach the same level as creoles and Spaniards—and parish priests did not act this way nearly often enough. Moreover, like Lorenzana, Omerick thought the ideal parish priest not only had to work directly with his parishioners—he would also need to be well-educated, and interested in improving his parish by way of charity, good works and instruction.

Omerick dedicated an entire chapter of his instruction manual to convincing priests to teach native parishioners Christian doctrine in Spanish. Like Lorenzana, he thought "we should aspire to the use of a universal language," particularly in parish administration.[139] Once again echoing the arguments of many reformers, Omerick contended that native tongues could not properly convey the tenets of Christianity, particularly the idea of the Holy Trinity. Like some other thinkers of this era, he asserted that many Catholic concepts could be explained in Nahuatl, but not in other native tongues—especially Mazahua, which he described as an "imperfect and inhibited" form

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[137] Taylor, Magistrates of the Sacred, 168. Translation his.
[138] "Conversaciones familiares," fs. 5-6.
[139] *Ibid*., fs. 115-116.

of Otomi. He had learned Mazahua in order to instruct his parishioners, but he had had difficulty explaining doctrine in the language because it was "absurd, discordant, [and] unsuitable" and had "very foreign" ways of signifying concepts.[140] Omerick even listed a variety of words he thought were impossible to translate into Mazahua. He complained that, in order to utilize these ideas, he had to use Spanish terms, which his indigenous parishioners did not understand.[141]

As part of his tirade against indigenous languages, Omerick criticized priests for maintaining those languages for their own personal benefit. According to Omerick, some clerics refused to speak Spanish to parishioners because in native tongues "they have consolidated... a living," referring to the idea that *lengua* priests were able to achieve ordination and obtain benefices on the strength of their language skills alone.[142] They had little incentive to give up the languages that had in some sense made their careers. This was an intriguing argument, given that Omerick himself built his career on his language skills: as mentioned above, he would later become a prebend and canon of the Nahuatl language at a prestigious collegiate church. Perhaps this is why he reserved his harshest critiques for Mazahua, and claimed that Nahuatl *could* effectively describe many aspects of Christian doctrine. Despite the fact that his successful career was attributable in part to

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[140] *Ibid*., f. 121.

[141] The Spanish words Omerick thought were impossible to translate into Mazahua were: *consagración* (consecration); *hipóstasis* (hypostasis); *gracia* (grace); *sacrificio* (sacrifice); *altar* (altar); *hostia* (host); *libertad* (liberty); *absolución* (absolution); *atrición* (atrition); *acción* (act); *Pasión* (the Passion); *materia* (subject); *unión* (union); *transubstanciación* (transubstantiation); *identidad* (identity); *dintinción* (distinction); *atributos* (attributes); *continuo* (continuous); *cantidad* (quantity); *predicamento* (prestige, or predicament); *formalidad* (formality); *termino* (term); *objeto* (object); *alma* (soul); *sacramento* (sacrament); *juramento* (oath); *incesto* (incest); *sacrilegio* (sacrilege); and *revelación* (revelation), plus one illegible term. *Ibid*., f. 122.

[142] *Ibid*., f. 121.

his linguistic abilities, Omerick clearly believed in Lorenzana's mission to improve indigenous peoples, encourage education within the clergy, and spread the Spanish language—and believed this strongly enough to write a lengthy manual on the matter.

## ORDERS FROM THE MONARCH

In 1770, the Hispanization goals of men like Omerick would become royal law. After receiving letters from Lorenzana, Fabián y Fuero and the Marquis de Croix encouraging strict Hispanization policies, Charles III approved their requests on March 7, 1770. He stated that the measures the archbishop had suggested would be implemented. Clerics of the most "merit" would receive benefices even if they did not speak the local language; *indios* would now have to know Spanish in order to hold political office; and Spanish-language schools would be established in indigenous towns, among other changes.[143]

Shortly thereafter, on April 16, 1770, Charles III released a royal decree that would put Lorenzana's requests into law—one that applied not only to New Spain, but to the entire Spanish Empire. Most of the decree simply repeated Lorenzana's remarks from his 1769 letter to the king. It stated that a sole universal language—Spanish—would facilitate administration and spiritual instruction. This would allow indigenous peoples to be understood by their superiors, love the "*nación conquistadora*" (conquering nation), and become "civilized" enough to participate in commerce effectively. It would also

[143] Yannakakis, *The Art of Being In-Between*, 177.

ensure that "men do not get confused, as in the Tower of Babel." Charles III (and Lorenzana) lamented that too few indigenous peoples spoke Spanish, and placed some of the blame for this upon *indios* themselves. The decree stated that many indigenous peoples refused to learn the language or send their children to school. Others, according to this decree, did understand Spanish, but insisted on speaking to priests and royal officials in their own languages, even if doing so meant that an interpreter was required.[144]

Primarily, however, the 1770 royal order blamed parish priests for the fact that few natives spoke Spanish. "The root of the problem," the order stated, was "the provision of parishes to individuals [who speak] the languages of the natives," who always preached and explained Christian doctrine in parishioners' own languages.[145] It suggested two reasons that clerics continued to speak these languages and would not use Spanish with their native parishioners. First, creole clerics believed knowing a native language was the only way for them to gain any advantage over European clergymen in the race for benefices; thus, it benefited them to enable the persistence of these languages. Second, if these tongues were to disappear, then so too would the option to become ordained *a título de idioma*—an option upon which many clerics relied.[146] Supposedly armed with these incentives to continue speaking native tongues, *lengua* clerics had failed to promote Spanish in New Spain's pueblos.

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[144] AGN, RCO Vol. 96, exp. 102. Charles III seems to have rereleased this very same decree again about a month later, on May 10, 1770. Konetzke, *Colección de Documentos* 3:1 n. 214 (1770).
[145] AGN, RCO Vol. 96, exp. 102.
[146] *Ibid*.

In the 1770 decree, Charles III (and Lorenzana, since much of the decree was a copy of the prelate's letter) reasoned that the best way to combat this situation was to grant benefices to priests with the most merit, regardless of their linguistic abilities. The two reformers agreed on this matter, but disagreed on how to implement it. Whereas Lorenzana was highly critical of the practice of hiring linguistically skilled *vicarios* to serve native parishioners, Charles III encouraged this as a viable alternative to granting benefices to *lengua* priests in his 1770 decree. The king wrote that clerics who did not speak the local language could hire *vicarios* in case any urgent situations arose involving parishioners who still knew no Spanish; by "urgent" situations he may have meant instances where an *indio* was dying and required last rites, for instance. The monarch made clear that, for this reason, benefices should not be left without *lengua* clerics. At the same time, however, candidates with "merit" were not to lose their opportunity for a benefice just because they did not know the local language.[147]

The 1770 decree also built upon Rubio y Salinas's complaints in 1758 that too many benefices went to undereducated priests. Once again echoing Lorenzana's letter to the monarch, Charles III linked this issue with language by warning that, if native tongues persisted, *lengua* clerics would take many of the parish positions, leaving the Archbishopric's most skilled and learned priests without posts:

> …what will occur is that a cleric of less merit, low birth, and perhaps poor customs will attain, for knowing a language, a parish that should have been the reward for a more decorated individual. In the colleges of Mexico, Puebla, and other capitals, the youths of the most distinguished birth and ability are educated;

[147] *Ibid.*

> and it is a difficult thing that, after tiring themselves studying the *Facultades Mayores*, they see *idioma* clerics, who at the most have studied a *Suma Moral*, get promoted to parishes, since it takes much work and effort for Spaniards to learn another language, when they have not grown up with the natives…[148]

This passage makes clear that Lorenzana and Charles III hoped to elevate the educational level of the clergy in part by granting clerics incentive for enduring years of schooling. Believing that *lengua* priests with limited theological training were effectively stealing jobs from more qualified individuals, the two reformers thought it prudent to ensure that highly educated clerics were more or less guaranteed a benefice.

Drawing once again from previous arguments in favor of Hispanization, the authors of the 1770 order asserted that imposing a single language would facilitate both royal and ecclesiastical governance. Lorenzana and Charles III thought that, within a few years of altering the manner of assigning *curas* to benefices, all royal officials would be able to understand *indios* without need for interpreters, and bishops would be understood in every single parish. Unsurprisingly, the decree invoked the same argument that Lorenzana had made elsewhere regarding prelates and languages: that a bishop should be able to communicate with his entire flock, but could not possibly learn all the languages spoken in his diocese.[149] If prelates were to understand all of the parishioners under their care, then parishioners would need to learn Spanish.

After the release of the 1770 ruling, Lorenzana and other proponents of Hispanization worked toward enforcing it. In his Fifteenth Edict, released later in 1770, the archbishop copied out the monarch's law, explained why he supported it, and

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[148] *Ibid*.
[149] *Ibid*.

demanded that clerics and officials in the archbishopric obey.[150] Viceroy Marquis de Croix released a circular that same year, also ordering compliance.[151] As mentioned, the Fourth Provincial Mexican Council, celebrated in 1771, issued orders that for the most part imitated those of Charles III, Lorenzana, and the other Hispanization supporters—which is unsurprising, given that the monarch ordered the formation of the Council to begin with, not to mention the deep involvement of Lorenzana and Fabián y Fuero in its sessions.

Although occasional decrees on the matter surfaced after 1771, the Hispanization movement slowed dramatically at this time. In 1778, Charles III released another royal decree asking local officials throughout the Empire to found schools for teaching Spanish and Christian doctrine. In 1782, interim Viceroy Martín de Mayorga issued a circular requesting compliance with the 1778 order.[152] There is also some evidence that the next monarch, Charles IV, tried to enforce the Hispanization reforms of his predecessor. Sometime in the early 1790s, he asked the governor of Tabasco (in eastern Mexico) to comply with previous orders to establish Spanish-language schools for indigenous children.[153] Various other reformists, such as Hipólito Villarroel, also encouraged spreading Spanish and reforming the clergy after the early 1770s.[154] However, by the

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[150] Lorenzana, Edicto XV (1770).
[151] AGN, Bandos Vol. 7, exp. 91.
[152] AGN, Bandos Vol. 12, exp. 2. For the version of the 1778 decree that Charles III sent to Charcas, see Konetzke, *Colección de Documentos* 3:1 n. 245 (1778).
[153] AGN, Historia Vol. 499, fs. 168r-187v.
[154] Hipólito Villarroel wrote a lengthy treatise in 1787 detailing his recommendations for reforming the Spanish Empire. Among numerous other suggestions, Villarroel's publication encouraged Hispanization, lamented the state of the clergy, and argued that indigenous peoples were not inherently irrational. Hipólito

time Lorenzana, Fabián y Fuero, Marquis de Croix and Charles III had finished their terms, the most substantial push for Hispanization had subsided. Later prelates, viceroys and monarchs do not seem to have had as much interest in imposing the Spanish language. By 1772, the language reforms were more or less over.

## CONCLUSION

According to proponents of radical Hispanization in the late 1760s and early 1770s, spreading the Spanish language was a critical cog in a larger program of imperial and religious revitalization. According to Lorenzana, Fabián y Fuero and other like-minded reformers, education and good customs were the key to a better, more informed, and more productive citizenry. Indigenous peoples had the capacity to join this citizenry, but only with the guidance and leadership of their parish priests and prelates, and only if they integrated with the more learned and less "Indian" residents of the viceroyalty. Clerics could only provide this guidance if they themselves were learned and well respected—and, according to proponents of Hispanization, the *lengua* priests who administered parishes in native languages were rarely learned or respected. Moreover, natives could only integrate into the rest of society if they could speak Spanish. The proliferation of native tongues made it possible for undereducated clerics to occupy all the benefices, leaving none for those who had worked hard to become skilled theologians. It also made it impossible for indigenous peoples to feel like part of the

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Villarroel, *Enfermedades políticas que padece la capital de esta Nueva España…* (México: Miguel Ángel Porrua, 1999).

empire, to defend themselves from their superiors, or to value the education their Spanish-speaking brethren apparently held so dear. If Lorenzana and Fabián y Fuero were to attain their goal of a rational, unified, well-informed citizenry of good Catholics, then everyone—priests and parishioners alike—would need to speak Spanish.

For these reformers, then, Hispanization was not a means to attaining a single goal (such as secularization or de-Indianization), but rather part of their broad vision for a reformed New Spain. Archbishop Lorenzana's seemingly contradictory affinity for the Nahuatl language, linguists who studied it, and for Mexica culture only makes sense in this context. The prelate valued education and scholarly study above all else: learned people were better leaders, better Catholics and better imperial citizens. Thus, to his mind, the eminent linguists who helped him translate the Aztec tribute roll were admirable, and studying the Mexica past was a valuable undertaking. On the parish level, however, the preeminence of native languages seemed to run counter to his vision of an educated citizenry. As objects of study, indigenous tongues fit nicely into Lorenzana's vision of empire. But as a medium for everyday communication, these same languages seemed like the antithesis of everything the archbishop stood for. Inspired by language ideologies, Enlightenment thought and recent Spanish philosophies of governance, Lorenzana and his fellow reformers saw value in indigenous languages—but only in the distant past.

# Chapter Four: The Consequences of Reform: Assigning Benefices in the Archbishopric of Mexico

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, the Bourbon language reform efforts of the late 1760s and early 1770s focused in large part on altering the methods for ordaining priests and assigning benefices. Archbishop Lorenzana and his fellow reformers sought to eliminate (or at least drastically reduce) native language competency as a factor in these processes. If parish priests were to "fix" indigenous peoples, they would need to be excellent teachers and theologians, with "good customs" so they could lead by example. Although *ciencia* and *literatura* had always been important qualifications for parish priests, the reformists of the late 1760s and early 1770s saw them as paramount. Reformers perceived *lengua* priests—and especially those ordained *a título de idioma*—as too lacking in learning or good breeding to perform the sacred duty of improving the Empire's indigenous citizenry. Worst of all, these lackluster clergymen were occupying all the parish posts, while clerics who had worked hard to earn doctorates were out of work simply because they spoke no indigenous languages—or so reformers believed. By 1770, Charles III had put these reformist impulses into law. The men who selected priests for benefices—ecclesiastical examiners, archbishops and viceroys—were to grant benefices to clerics with the most merit, regardless of linguistic qualifications. Indigenous languages were effectively banished from parish administration—in theory, if not in practice.

This chapter builds on the previous one by shifting focus from the intellectual and political origins of the Hispanization reforms to their effects on the ground, among the secular clergy. I evaluate the consequences of these reforms in the Archbishopric of Mexico by analyzing the records of seven benefice competitions from throughout the reign of the Bourbon dynasty, from 1709 until 1810. As I illustrated in Chapter One, a priest's language competency was intimately linked to his other qualities and qualifications as a clergyman. Reformers hoped that eliminating language as a factor in ordaining clerics and assigning benefices would lead to a better, more educated clergy with better "customs," whose success would be determined solely by their "merit." Therefore, my analysis of benefice competitions and ordination records focuses not solely on the role of language competency in these processes, but on these processes as a whole: How did archbishops, viceroys and ecclesiastical examiners determine who should receive which benefice? What factors did they consider? What qualifications made a parish priest successful in the archbishopric? Did knowing a native language help priests acquire benefices? By exploring these questions and how their answers changed over time, this chapter demonstrates that the language reforms were only partially successful.

Little is known about the results of the Hispanization reforms. Dorothy Tanck de Estrada's excellent study of Spanish-language schools in the late 18$^{th}$ century provides significant insight into one side of the reform effort: its demand that indigenous peoples learn Spanish. From her work, we know that the Hispanization initiative led to the establishment of many Spanish-language schools. As a result, literacy rates rose, and many natives learned Spanish (albeit without forgetting their own languages); however,

the implementation of Spanish-language education was fraught with difficulties, in part because many indigenous peoples refused to send their children to school.[1] Yet no scholarship has addressed the broader consequences of Hispanization for clerical reform—which influential men like Lorenzana saw as intimately tied up with language reform—save for William Taylor's brief (yet helpful) observations on the matter.[2] By building upon Taylor's findings with a close analysis of the role of language competency in assigning benefices in the Archbishopric of Mexico, I demonstrate that the Hispanization initiative successfully affected parish administration, but failed to bring about reformers' broader goal to improve the clergy.

I make two arguments in this chapter. The first is that merit—defined by education, reputation and experience—was the primary guiding principle behind the process of assigning benefices in the archbishopric. The prelates, viceroys and ecclesiastical examiners who selected clerics for benefices did so primarily based on the notion that parish priests had to *earn* a good benefice—generally by way of education, reputation and/or experience—and that those who had earned a good benefice should receive one. The desirability of each parish was an essential factor in determining who received which benefice, and often, though not always, trumped the linguistic needs of the parish.

My second assertion is that the Hispanization reforms of the late 1760s and early 1770s did bring change to the process of assigning benefices in the archbishopric;

[1] Tanck de Estrada, *Pueblos de indios y educación*.
[2] Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred*, 93-96.

however, these changes were minimal. Language competency played a significantly smaller role in determining parish assignments after this time. Yet this was mostly the case in the interior part of the archbishopric, within a relatively short distance from Mexico City. In more remote areas with highly undesirable parishes—and especially in volatile mining regions—most *curas* knew the indigenous languages spoken in their parishes, even after Charles III issued his far-reaching Hispanization law in 1770. Moreover, language skills did not hurt a cleric's chances at attaining a benefice, and could sometimes even help him make up for deficiencies in his other qualifications.

Perhaps most importantly, the factors determining which priests received which benefices remained more or less the same after the Hispanization reforms. Throughout the 18th century, royal and ecclesiastical authorities doled out parish assignments based primarily on the notion that education, experience and reputation should garner a cleric a desirable benefice. Language skills were normally secondary to these other qualifications, but this was the case throughout the entire 18th century, not just after the reforms. Both before and after, royal and ecclesiastical authorities assigned many parishes to priests who were academically unimpressive, and many clerics received benefices on the strength of their language skills. Although reformers managed to limit the importance of language competency for clerics' careers, their attempt to raise the parish clergy's educational standards was unsuccessful.

In what follows, I examine the results of seven benefice competitions, which took place in the years 1709-10, 1749, 1796, 1799, 1800, 1807 and 1810. These competitions do not make for a completely ideal analysis of change over time, for three reasons. First,

given that the Independence war was taking place at the time, the 1810 results can hardly be said to be representative of colonial-era benefice competitions. Second, the dates of the competitions I examined skew heavily towards the last few decades of Bourbon rule. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, they do not include the years immediately before and after the height of the Bourbon language reforms in the late 1760s and early 1770s. It is possible that my findings would look different if they included competitions from the 1750s-1780s. They might show drastic alterations in the process of selecting priests for parishes while Lorenzana and his reformist colleagues were in power—changes that do not show up in my data.

Although the documents used here cannot reveal how or whether changes occurred during these particular critical decades of intensive reform, they nevertheless provide a more general picture of how parish administration changed and remained the same over the course of over a century. This data does provide insight into the broader, long-term effects of the Hispanization reforms, if not the immediate effects. What we cannot know is whether the effects found here were those desired by Lorenzana and his colleagues, or if later prelates and monarchs changed tactics and assigned benefices differently than their reformist predecessors. The latter option would not be terribly surprising, given that Viceroy Bucareli seems to have been opposed to the language reforms, and given that Lorenzana's radical approach to Hispanization had mostly lost favor among royal and ecclesiastical authorities by the mid-1770s.

This chapter begins with a statistical assessment of the Hispanization reforms, revealing how often *lengua* benefices were granted to priests who spoke the local

language. Second, I explore evidence that language competency remained a factor in benefice competitions well beyond the early 1770s. Third, I examine each factor that helped to determine who received which benefice: parish desirability; clerics' education, reputation, experience and language competency; and regional considerations. Finally, I end the chapter by assessing the extent to which the reality of parish assignments matched up with the goals of Lorenzana and other like-minded reformers. Although they successfully reduced the presence of *lengua* clerics in the archbishopric's parishes, their goal of reforming the priesthood was thwarted by their erroneous assumption that *lengua* priests were the primary obstacle to a better, more educated clergy.

## THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE COMPETENCY IN BENEFICE ASSIGNMENTS AND ORDINATION: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

In keeping with Charles III's 1770 Hispanization law, after that date prelates and examiners became significantly less likely to grant the archbishopric's benefices to priests who spoke the local language. In most of the benefice competitions I examined from before 1770, the vast majority of parishes with a *lengua* designation went to a priest who had some knowledge of the local language.[3] For each of these pre-1770 competitions, at least two-thirds of the available *lengua* parishes were granted to a priest

[3] As mentioned in Chapter One, parish *lengua* designations may not always have always accurately reflected the languages residents actually spoke. However, these designations provide the best data available with which to gauge whether priests could communicate with parishioners. Moreover, when assigning benefices, ecclesiastical authorities would have been using these same designations to make their decisions—they may not have had any better information regarding the languages spoken by parishioners. Thus, while weighing parish *lengua* designations against the linguistic skills of their parish priests cannot tell us for sure whether these priests could communicate with their parishioners, it does at least provide insight into whether authorities took language competency into consideration when assigning benefices.

who knew the appropriate tongue. Out of a total of 37 benefices available in competitions between 1709 and 1749, only five (about 14%) received a priest who definitely did not speak the language. In contrast, after 1770, most *lengua* benefices were granted to clerics who did not know the language of the parish. In each competition that occurred after 1770, only one-third to one-half of the available *lengua* benefices were granted to a priest who knew the appropriate tongue. In total, between 1788 and 1810, 40 out of 66 (61%) priests who received *lengua* parishes did not know the local language—a sharp rise from the mere 14% for 1709 to 1749 (see Table 1 below).[4]

A book detailing the archbishopric's benefices and the ministers who served them between 1772 and 1784 confirms these findings. The book lists 227 parishes, at least 208 of which were marked as *lengua* benefices. I was able to find information on the parish priest and/or *vicario* entrusted with 75 of these *lengua* benefices. Only 65% of this sample of 75 parishes had some minister (parish priest or *vicario*) who spoke the benefice's designated tongue.[5] Both this book and the benefice competitions I examined from after 1770 indicate that many *curas* and *vicarios* did not know the languages spoken in their parishes in the late 18th century.

[4] AGN, BN 495, exp. 3 (1695); AGN, BN 338, exp. 2 (1709-10); AGN, IV Caja 6525, exp. 38 (1720); AGN, BN 603, exp. 12 (1739); AGN, BN 199, exp. 12 (1749); AGN, BN 603, exp. 5 (1768); AGN, IV Caja 152, exp. 15 (1788); AGN, BN 577, exp. 1 (1796-1800); AGN, IV Caja 4609, exp. 28 (1807); AGN, IV Caja 676, exp. 1 (1810). Many of these records only provide results in the form of the archbishop's *ternas*, rather than the viceroy's final decisions. It is therefore possible that viceroys overruled some of these results, although this rarely occurred.

[5] AHAM, BC Caja 107CL, Libro 3.

Table 1: Lengua Benefices Granted to Parish Priests who Spoke the Local Language, 1709-1810

| Competition Year[6] | Number of lengua benefices in competition | Number of lengua benefices granted to a priest who spoke the language[7] | Percentage of benefices granted to a priest who spoke the language |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1709-10** | 18 | 13 | 72% |
| **1720** | 3 | 3 | 100% |
| **1739** | 3 | At least 2 | 67-100% |
| **1749** | 13 | 13 | 100% |
| **1788** | 6 | 2 | 33% |
| **1796** | 39 | 15 | 38% |
| **1807** | 15 | 7 | 47% |
| **1810** | 6 | 2 | 33% |

Although few priests knew the designated language of their benefices after 1770, ecclesiastical examiners, archbishops and viceroys nevertheless continued to take clerics' language skills into account when assigning benefices. As part of the archbishopric's benefice competitions, these authorities evaluated candidates' language competency and denoted their linguistic abilities in lists of finalists. This was the case both before and

[6] "Competition year" refers to the year the archbishop sent out the announcement to begin the benefice competition. Many of these competitions lasted multiple years, and went through multiple iterations (*provisiones*). For instance, the 1796 competition lasted until 1800 because it went through three iterations, in order to fill the benefices left behind by priests who had earned new ones.

[7] Evidence I used to conclude that a priest spoke the language included a language exam grade, a note in his *méritos* or application that he spoke the language, or a statement in the *terna* or other competition documents noting that he knew the language. Many of these benefice competitions do not provide complete information about applicants or the final competition results. Documentation for these competitions does not always indicate whether a priest spoke a native tongue, or how well he spoke it. The chart indicates that "at least 2" *lengua* benefices in the 1739 competition went to priests who knew the language because the available records do not indicate which priest was given the benefice of Tepozotlan.

after the Hispanization reforms. The *ternas*—a list the archbishop would send to the viceroy of top three selections for priests to fill a vacant benefice—normally included brief descriptions of the three priests. Every one of these lists I examined included information about candidates' language qualifications, even after 1770 and into the early nineteenth century. For example, as part of an 1810 competition, Archbishop Nuñez de Haro y Peralta's 1810 *terna* for the benefice of Huichapan (in modern-day Hidalgo) made clear that a candidate's language competency was a factor in his decision. The notary wrote "Othomit" under the parish name, to indicate that it was designated as an Otomi-speaking area. The archbishop selected Josef Julián Teodoro González as his first choice for the benefice, and described him as the "*cura* of Atitalaquia who has been a *cura* for four years, one and a half as an *interino* (interim priest), and three as a *vicario*, judged second-rate in *moral* and Otomi language."[8] The archbishop only mentioned the language skills of a select few candidates who earned coveted spots in his *ternas* that year. However, the fact that he mentioned these skills at all suggests that he did consider priests' language competency as part of his decision-making process, and assumed that the viceroy would as well. These *ternas* also reveal that examiners continued to administer language exams as part of these competitions into the nineteenth century, at least until 1810.

Language skills continued to play an important role in ordination, as well. In spite of promises by Lorenzana and Rubio y Salinas to cease ordaining priests based on their language skills, in the archbishopric this practice continued into the early 19th century,

[8] AGN, IV Caja 676, exp. 1.

and probably through the end of the colonial period. The ordination records I examined indicate that men still applied for ordination *a título de idioma* until at least 1800; Taylor's findings suggest the same.[9] Matthew O'Hara even posits that the number of priests ordained in this manner increased slightly over the 17th and 18th centuries, though it is unclear whether this observation applies to the decades after 1770.[10]

Although plenty of priests were ordained *a título de idioma* in the late 18th century, Taylor and Aguirre Salvador contend that few such clerics managed to rise above *vicario* or attain their own benefices.[11] Unfortunately, I have no means of confirming or denying this suggestion. Most of the records I accessed for benefice competitions after 1770 include few, if any *méritos*, so most of my information comes from the archbishop's *ternas*, which rarely indicated clerics' manner of ordination. However, the way the *subdelegado* of Malinalco (State of Mexico) described the coadjutor of Tenancingo (also State of Mexico) in 1793 suggests that Taylor's findings may be valid: "even though he is ordained *a título de idioma*, he aspires to appointment in a parish of his own."[12] Yet, as I explain below, parishes were assigned based in part on educational attainment—an area in which *título de idioma* clerics rarely excelled. Whether these men had trouble obtaining benefices because of their limited academic

[9] Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred*, 96. *Título de idioma* ordination records from 1770 and later appear in AGN, BN 88, exp. 15 (1770-1771); AGN, BN 41, exp. 8 (1771); AGN, BN 320, exp. 18 (1772); AGN, BN 450, exp. 39-40 (1773); AGN, BN 450, exp. 42 (1774); AGN, BN 681, exp. 6 (1775); and AGN, BN 278, exp. 12 (1800-1807).
[10] Matthew O'Hara, *A Flock Divided*, 74. It is possible that this applies only to the early decades of the 18th century, given that Rodolfo Aguirre's finding that Archbishop Lanciego Eguilaz ordained far more priests a título de idioma than did his predecessor. Aguirre Salvador, *Un clero en transición*, 79-81.
[11] Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred*, 96 and Aguirre Salvador, *Un clero en transición*, 214.
[12] Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred*, 96. Translation his.

achievements or simply because they had been ordained *a título de idioma* is difficult to tell.

The fact that most *título de idioma* priests in the late 18th century were *vicarios* indicates that, as Charles III had ordered in 1770, *curas* might have hired linguistically skilled *vicarios* to administer to indigenous peoples who could not yet speak Spanish. However, the aforementioned book of the archbishopric's 1772-1784 benefices suggests otherwise. In this register, *lengua* ministers were mostly parish priests, not *vicarios*. Of the 75 parishes in this book about which I had sufficient information, 17 (23%) had a parish priest who did not know the language, but employed a linguistically skilled *vicario*. Significantly more benefices—32, or 43%—had a parish priest who knew the local language.[13] In the decade or so after Charles III's order, then, parish priests were still more likely to know the local language themselves than to rely upon a *vicario* to do the translating for them.

## PARISH DESIRABILITY

Both before and after Charles III's 1770 Hispanization law, one of the most important factors royal and ecclesiastical authorities used to determine who filled each benefice was the desirability of the available parishes. This was derived in part from the income it provided: "first-class" parishes, or *curatos pingües* (literally "rich" or "lucrative" parishes), provided a salary sufficient for a comfortable living, while *curas* of

[13] AHAM, BC Caja 107CL, Libro 3.

"second-" and "third-class" benefices generally received significantly less. All parish priests earned their income (*renta*) from fees collected from their parishioners for services such as baptisms, funerals, marriages, masses and feast days. In some cases, a parish's *renta* also included a *sínodo*—a stipend from the Spanish Crown to supplement priests' salaries.[14] *Rentas* varied widely between benefices. For instance, while in 1793 the benefice of Actopan (Hidalgo) provided an annual income of 4,800 pesos, the salary for the Escanela (Querétaro) benefice that same year was a mere 400 pesos. These salary differences appear to have depended in large part upon parishioners' wealth and resources; thus, mining towns in the midst of a boom, for instance, tended to provide very high salaries. This also meant that parish salaries could change substantially over time, sometimes even switching from a third- to a first-class designation or vice-versa.[15]

For obvious reasons, *curas* tended to covet benefices that provided a comfortable income; meanwhile, parishes with low salaries sometimes saw high turnover.[16] Other qualities that determined each benefice's desirability included proximity to major urban centers or other *pueblos*; climate; distance between settlements; road quality; and the extent to which parishioners were cooperative and compliant. Broadly speaking, first-class benefices were often in or near Mexico City and had a decent salary, pleasant climate, good roads, and/or content parishioners. On the other hand, third-class parishes frequently required difficult travel, had a remote location, and subjected *curas* to

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[14] Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred*, 127 and 138-140. In the 16th century, priests received *sínodos* from either the Crown or *encomenderos* (Spaniards to whom *indios* paid tribute). Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred*, 127.
[15] *Ibid*., 138-140.
[16] *Ibid*., 79, 107-109, 127 and 138.

rebellious parishioners amid harsh weather conditions.[17] Thus, the class rating of a parish generally determined whether the experience of working there was comfortable or difficult, lucrative or poverty-inducing. These ratings played an essential role in the process of assigning benefices both before and after the language reforms. Hispanization laws would do little to change this.

## EDUCATION

The language laws of the late 18th century also did little to change the fact that, as David Brading has suggested, a good education was a cleric's best asset.[18] Broadly speaking, well-educated priests were the most likely to receive the archbishopric's most desirable parishes. To determine which priests received the most sought-after benefices, I merged my data from benefice competition records with that from William Taylor's map of the archbishopric's most and least desirable benefices (based on parish class and turnover rates), as well as his lists of first-, second- and third-class parishes.[19] Although there were plenty of exceptions, viceroys, archbishops and ecclesiastical examiners tended to grant the most desirable benefices to well-educated clerics. In particular, priests with doctorates were very likely to receive a desirable parish. Of the 22 clerics with doctorates who attained benefices in the competitions I examined, 18 received parishes

[17] *Ibid*., 107-109.
[18] Brading contends that "the key to ecclesiastical preferment was academic achievement." Brading, *Church and State*, 110.
[19] Taylor's map of the archbishopric's most and least desirable parishes appears in *Magistrates of the Sacred*, 112-113. His lists of first-, second- and third-class parishes is in the same volume, Appendix A, 477-490.

that were first class, had low turnover, and/or were located in Mexico City. Some of the remaining four priests with doctorates might also have been pleased with their posts. For instance, in 1800 one of these highly educated clerics received the benefice of San Sebastián de Querétaro, which was located in an urban area (the city of Querétaro) and probably provided a very good salary.[20] A good education did not guarantee placement in a highly sought-after parish: the remaining three clerics with doctorates received less-than stellar second- and third-class benefices. Nevertheless, for parish priests who sought a good living in a comfortable parish, a graduate education was extremely valuable.

Although a doctorate was perhaps a parish priest's best chance at a good benefice, those who could demonstrate their learning through other means could also find comfortable parish work. As noted in Chapter One, as part of every benefice competition, each applicant took oral and written *suficiencia* (also called *moral*) exams to test their theological proficiency. Priests who did well on their *suficiencia* exams were more likely to receive a desirable benefice than those who performed poorly on these tests. For instance, in the benefice competition I examined from 1709-10, nine of the available parishes could be categorized as highly desirable based either on their location (in Mexico City) or on Taylor's list of most desirable parishes. Seven of these good benefices went to clerics with doctorates, and the other two were granted to priests who received a grade of "first" on their *suficiencia* exams. Meanwhile, the three least desirable benefices all went to priests who attained only a "second" or "third" on their

[20] AGN, BN 577, exp. 1 (1796-1800). Although there is no specific evidence regarding San Sebastián de Querétaro's parish income at this time, the Bajío region's prosperity and booming population in the 18th century likely meant that the benefice offered a comfortable living. D. A. Brading, *Miners and Merchants in Bourbon Mexico, 1763-1810* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 224-227.

exams.[21] The organization of the documentation regarding the 1749 competition provides additional insight. Whoever bound this set of papers together (presumably some ecclesiastical examiner) ordered applicants' *méritos* based on their *suficiencia* marks, placing those who did the best on the exam first.[22] Although the *méritos* for the other competitions I examined are not organized in this fashion, the fact that anyone thought to order them based on exam grades indicates that these tests played a significant role in determining priests' career paths.

Parish priests who had previously held important positions within the royal or ecclesiastical hierarchy also tended to do well in benefice competitions. This was likely in part because these jobs required a certain level of learning, and also because they showed that the candidate had connections to important individuals and institutions. The aforementioned men who received top benefices in the 1709-10 competitions not only had doctorates or received good marks on their *suficiencia* exams—most of them had also previously held or applied for canonries, royal hospital chaplaincies, professorships, or positions at the Virgin of Guadalupe's sanctuary.

Regardless of whether he successfully attained the position, merely applying for posts at illustrious institutions could serve as a sign of a cleric's education, connections and academic participation. This was especially the case if he managed to place within the top three candidates. Priests who had applied for such jobs but failed to secure them often mention their previous application in their *méritos*, and archbishops sometimes

[21] AGN, BN 338, exp. 2 (1709-10).
[22] AGN, BN 199, exp. 12 (1749).

noted these attempts in their *ternas*. For instance, Archbishop Nuñez de Haro y Peralta gave Antonio Monteagudo first place in his *terna* for the parish of Xochimilco in a 1796 benefice competition. The prelate noted not only that Monteagudo had a doctorate, served as a theological consultant for a royal advisory body, and had spent four years as a parish priest, but also that he had applied for various canonries.[23] Monteagudo was hardly lacking in qualifications, but the archbishop still found his applications for canonries worthy enough to mention in his brief *terna*.

In other cases, holding or applying for distinguished ecclesiastical positions might have helped candidates to make up for otherwise unimpressive educational qualifications. For instance, the 1800 competition I examined offered only one highly desirable benefice: San Francisco Ixtlahuaca, in what is now the State of Mexico. There was no shortage of competition for this single appealing parish. Yet, the candidate chosen for it—Agustín Cesareo de los Ángeles—earned earned only "second" on his *suficiencia* exam and had never advanced beyond a bachelor's degree. However, the *terna* noted that he had placed second and third for various *prebendas de idioma*—prebends specifically designated for clerics who spoke a native language.[24] Records from the Collegiate Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe indicate that this was where he had applied for such a position.[25] As I demonstrate in Chapter Five, churchmen generally considered institutions like this Collegiate Church to be honorable, and their prebend and canonry positions were highly esteemed. De los Ángeles's attempt to procure one of these posts likely signaled

[23] AGN, BN 577, exp. 1 (1796-1800).
[24] *Ibid*.
[25] AGI México 2559.

that he was worthy enough for an important church to consider him a competitive candidate. Given his otherwise unimpressive academic qualifications, this might have been why he was awarded the much sought-after benefice of San Francisco Ixtlahuaca. Even a miniscule connection to an honorable institution could prove a cleric's educational merit, and help make up for other lacklustre qualifications.

### REPUTATION

Although education was generally the most important asset for priests seeking desirable benefices, a variety of other factors also helped to determine which clerics received which parishes, sometimes overriding educational merits. Clergymen who had good reputations and were on good terms with the archbishop and their parishioners often did well in benefice competitions. Parishioners sometimes felt they should have a say as to who administered their parish. Indeed, the legal system afforded them some sway on this matter: they had the ability to litigate against their priest when they disliked him, suffered abuses at his hand, or found his language skills lacking. Thus, a priest who was well liked by his people was likely to have an easier time administering his benefice and achieving promotions to other parishes.

Parishioners could also intervene in the process of assigning benefices, although their power to effect change in this process was limited. For instance, in Chapter One I described a petition that the indigenous parishioners of Xaltocan wrote to the viceroy, asking him to ensure that their next *cura* could speak Nahuatl. They complained that their

previous priest, Manuel Mendrice, had not known the language and thus had been unable to administer the Nahuatl-speaking parish effectively. The parishioners hoped that Viceroy Duke of Linares would ask the cabildo (cathedral chapter) to grant the parish to a priest who could communicate with them; and the viceroy did just that. In spite of the pleas of the viceroy and the people of Xaltocan, however, the Cabildo granted the benefice of Xaltocan to yet another priest who did not speak Nahuatl.[26] Xaltocan's parishioners played a role in the process of choosing a new priest for their benefice, but they were unable to convince the examiners and the archbishop to grant them a *cura* who suited their needs.

A cleric's reputation was important in part because, in some cases, parishioners had a say in the process of assigning benefices. Once royal and ecclesiastical authorities had selected a priest for a benefice, parishioners could protest the decision. This occurred in 1749, when Juan Francisco de Torrescano became the new parish priest of Tescaliacac. About a month after he took possession of the benefice, the local *gobernador* and *alcaldes* petitioned Archbishop Rubio y Salinas in the name of all the area's parishioners, for a new *cura*. They complained that Torrescano had "corrupted" their customs of celebrating a special sung Mass every Monday and Thursday. Worst of all, he could not understand Nahuatl.[27] As a result, they argued, he could not conduct confession or administer any of the other sacraments effectively. Thus, the people of Tescaliacac asked the archbishop to provide them with a different priest—one who could actually speak

[26] AGN, BN 236, exp. 24 (1711).
[27] Although the petition did not specify what language they were referring to, they most likely spoke Nahuatl, as this was the designated language of the parish.

their language. Oddly, Torrescano's language exam mark from the 1749 competition indicated that he did, in fact, speak Nahuatl, if not especially well—he received a grade of "second."[28] Perhaps he was not fluent enough to communicate well with his parishioners, or perhaps they wanted to get rid of him for other reasons. Regardless, although it is unclear whether the archbishop heeded their request, the petition's presence in the documents for the 1749 benefice competition indicates that someone must have at least acknowledged the parishioners' complaint.[29] At the very least, the people of Tescaliacac evidently felt that they had some say in the matter of who held their parish—and that they could reject royal and ecclesiastical authorities' decisions regarding who occupied their benefice.

Indeed, in some cases a *cura*'s reputation among his parishioners was critical to his prospects for promotion, especially if high-ranking authorities agreed that his reputation was sound. A great reputation could even override a cleric's less-than-stellar educational record. While some of the candidates who received first-class benefices in 1800 had doctorates or had done well on their exams, others could make no such claim to theological prowess. For instance, Francisco Iturbe y Iraeta earned only "second" on his *suficiencia* exam, and yet managed to attain the excellent benefice of Tenancingo, southwest of Mexico City in what is now the State of Mexico. Since education was not his strong suit, his stellar reputation likely earned him the benefice. In his *ternas* for the competition, Archbishop Alonso Núñez de Haro y Peralta stated that while serving as

[28] AGN, BN 199, exp. 12 (1749).
[29] *Ibid*.

interim priest of various parishes, Iturbe had demonstrated "solid judgment, good disposition, notorious unselfishness and orderly conduct…" In doing so, he had done these jobs "to my [the archbishop's] satisfaction and that of his parishioners." Moreover, Iturbe had already spent six months serving as interim priest of Tenancingo, during which time he seems to have garnered the loyalty of nearly everyone around him. According to the archbishop's *terna*, local *españoles* and the governor of Tenancingo's *república de indios* liked him so much that they requested that he become their long-term priest.[30] It is unclear what exactly parishioners, local politicians, and the prelate liked so much about him, or how parishioners might have informed the archbishop of their fondness for their *cura*. Yet Iturbe's outstanding reputation and popularity evidently secured him the benefice.

On the other hand, a poor reputation, especially among high-ranking royal or ecclesiastical authorities, could damage a *cura*'s career. As Taylor argues, "in practice, appointments to parochial benefices probably had as much to do with personal contacts as with formal qualifications."[31] At some point, Joseph Espino Barrios, discussed in Chapter One, must have crossed both Archbishop Juan Antonio de Vizarrón y Eguiarreta and Viceroy Revillagigedo the Elder. When Espino applied to become a professor in 1743, Archbishop Vizarrón forced him into parish work instead, granting him the remote and highly undesirable parish of Oapan, located in modern-day Guerrero. To add insult to injury, when Archbishop Rubio y Salinas proposed in 1747 that Espino should receive

[30] AGN, BN 577, exp. 1 (1796-1800).
[31] Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred*, 100.

the similarly unenticing parish of Iztapalapa (which is now part of Mexico City, but at the time would have been just southeast of the capital), Viceroy Revillagigedo disapproved, and selected a different priest for the benefice. Espino entered another benefice competition in 1749, and was selected for Coatepec. Although Coatepec's precise location is unclear, it was unquestionably one of the archbishopric's least desirable benefices.[32] Based purely on education, Espino should have received a better benefice than Coatepec: he earned a grade of "first" on his *suficiencia* exam and had previously served as a substitute professor.[33] Presumably, whatever Espino had done to upset Viceroy Revillagigedo was a factor in his placement in Coatepec. Throughout the 1740s, Espino's unfavorable reputation among powerful individuals haunted his career.

## EXPERIENCE

When selecting priests for benefices, viceroys, archbishops and examiners took into account not only candidates' education and popularity, but also their previous parish experience. Many clerics who received excellent benefices had substantial experience working with parishioners, and this was sometimes the deciding factor. There is some evidence that experience in difficult parishes was especially valuable: a 1799 *terna* states that the four years José Mariano Ferrara had worked as a parish priest in Acapulco "count

[32] AGN, BN 199, exp. 12 (1749). It is unclear whether the benefice Espino received was Coatepec or Coatepec de los Costales. However, both were located southwest of Mexico City in what is now the State of Mexico, and Taylor includes both on his list of the Archbishopric's least desirable parishes. Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred*, 112-113.
[33] AGN, BN 199, exp. 12.

as doubled," due to the region's unfavorable weather.[34] It is unclear whether time spent in difficult parishes always counted as double that of easier regions—there is no clear evidence that this was the case earlier in the 18th century, or that any undesirable aspect of a parish could be leveraged in this way. It is also unclear exactly how experience might have "counted" towards a promotion: this wording suggests that serving a certain number of years as a *cura* was supposed to result in promotion, but the details of this system are unclear. Although little is known about when and how archbishops, viceroys and examiners took clerics' experience (especially in unpleasant parishes) into account, the fact that they did so helps to explain why so many priests complained extensively about working conditions in their *méritos*, a tendency I explored in Chapter One. Enduring bad weather, a low salary, and rebellious parishioners may have been a legitimate qualification for a better parish; in some cases difficult parish work might have served as a sort of preparatory apprenticeship.

Indeed, years of experience in low-paying and unpleasant parishes did land some *curas* a better benefice. For instance, royal and ecclesiastical authorities granted Juan Manuel de Cea the most desirable parish available in the 1749 competition: Ocoyoacac, in the modern-day State of Mexico. Cea had no doctorate, and received only "second" on his *suficiencia* exam. However, he had extensive experience, much of it in undesirable parishes. After spending six years working as a *vicario*, he then served as *cura* for an additional 11 years, seven of which he spent in the remote parish of Huayacocotla, in what is now Veracruz. In his *méritos*, Cea described Huayacocotla as one of the "most

[34] AGN, BN 577, exp. 1 (1796-1800).

arduous" benefices in the archbishopric, and devoted an entire paragraph to bemoaning the difficulties of administering it.[35] Lacking any other especially impressive qualifications, Cea's endurance of years in a remote location must have helped him attain the much better benefice of Ocoyoacac.

Experience in difficult parishes might have helped clerics receive promotions to better benefices due in part to health concerns. As I noted in Chapter One, clerics in remote, undesirable areas with unfavorable climates frequently complained in their *méritos* that living and working in these areas had made them ill or caused injuries. Sometimes, they asked for a benefice in a less remote area with better weather for the sake of their health. Juan de Álvarez Serrano even stated in his 1709 application that he was unable to work anywhere but Mexico City due to an injury (which he did not name, though he described it in his *méritos* as resulting from a "dangerous accident"). The result of his request may or may not have satisfied him. Although the examiners, archbishop and viceroy did not grant him any of the highly sought-after benefices in the capital, they did give him the first-class parish of Ocoyoacac in what is now the State of Mexico, which might have provided him the comfort he required.[36]

Many of the other priests who received first-class benefices in 1709-10 also had health problems, and thus requested comfortable parishes in their applications. In response, authorities granted them both benefices that were good, but whose locations did not meet their health requirements. For example, Andrés Moreno Bala, who noted in his

[35] AGN, BN 199, exp. 12 (1749).
[36] AGN, BN 338, exp. 2 (1709-10).

*méritos* that he had various ailments from working in a variety of remote regions, attained the desirable benefice of Tenango del Valle (State of Mexico). Joseph Francisco Vásquez de Cabrera, whose *méritos* I described in Chapter One, received the excellent benefice of Taxco (Guerrero), but soon after had to renounce it due to health problems.[37] The fact that ecclesiastical authorities assigned Vásquez and Álvarez to parishes they supposedly could not administer due to health reasons raises questions about what "illness" meant in these situations. Both men received benefices that were less taxing than their previous ones, but neither parish met the requirements laid out in these two *curas'* applications. Yet, presumably, ecclesiastical authorities would not have granted Vásquez and Álvarez benefices they were physically unable to administer. It is possible that, while generally unhealthy, these two priests inflated their claims of illness as a way to signify that they had endured years of service in difficult parishes, and thus had earned a better post.

Yet hard work in difficult parishes counted for little if a cleric had never held his own benefice. Men with many years of experience in undesirable parishes appear to have been ineligible for the top benefices if they had only ever served as *vicarios* or *tenientes*. Regardless of how long they had worked or how difficult their parish experiences had been, clerics who had never served as *curas* almost inevitably ended up with the archbishopric's least desirable benefices, if they were lucky enough to get one at all. For example, two of the worst benefices available in 1709-10 went to clerics who had plenty of parish experience as *vicarios* or *curas interinos*, but had never held their own

[37] *Ibid*.

benefices.[38] Generally, if a priest was to attain an excellent benefice based on his experience, he had to work his way gradually up the chain of command, rising from *vicario* to *cura*, and from unappealing parishes to comfortable ones.

## NO GUARANTEES

Throughout the 18th and early 19th centuries it was a top priority of viceroys, archbishops and examiners to ensure that *curas* who received desirable benefices had earned them, by way of education, experience, or reputation amongst their parishioners and superiors. Nevertheless, these qualifications could not guarantee parish priests a good benefice, or even any benefice at all. For example, many clerics with excellent academic records who entered the 1709-10 benefice competition did not even receive a parish post—including some priests with doctorates.[39] It is not clear whether this ever occurred after the reforms of the late 1760s and early 1770s; the records used for this chapter unfortunately lack any information on candidates after 1770 who did not place in the archbishop's top three. Yet it is clear that reputable and highly-educated clerics did not always receive *desirable* benefices after 1770.

One example of a priest who was both learned and well-liked but could not acquire a desirable benefice is Gerónimo de Viya y Xivaja. Viya y Xivaja entered a benefice competition in 1796, and probably believed—incorrectly, as it turned out—that his excellent reputation and education would earn him a comfortable parish post. He had

[38] *Ibid*.
[39] *Ibid*.

a doctorate, earned "first" on his *suficiencia* exams, had worked as a professor, and the archbishop described him in his *terna* as a man of "good disposition and orderly conduct."[40] The competition went through three *provisiones* (provisions, or filling of parishes): the priests who attained new benefices in the first *provision* left behind parishes that needed to be filled, and then the priests who moved to those parishes left another series of benefices in need of new *curas*. Together, the three *provisiones* provided 43 parishes with new priests. Despite his impressive educational record and reputation, Viya y Xivaja was not granted a benefice until the third round. Once he finally succeeded in 1800, the parish he received, Mixquiahuala, was a fairly unpleasant one: its salary was relatively low, and most *curas* would have disliked its remote location in Hidalgo.[41] It is unclear why Viya y Xivaja had such difficulty obtaining a benefice, or why the one he eventually received was relatively undesirable. However, his case demonstrates beyond a doubt that doctorates and good reputations were not the sole factors determining which *curas* received benefices, nor could these qualifications guarantee a comfortable living.

## LANGUAGE COMPETENCY

While education, experience and reputation could not guarantee a *cura* a good benefice, these qualifications were nevertheless much more valuable than the ability to speak a native tongue. Knowledge of an indigenous language was rarely a critical

[40] AGN, BN 577, exp. 1 (1796-1800).
[41] *Ibid*.

precursor to attaining a desirable parish post. Language skills could be an asset, but one that was almost always secondary to a priest's other qualifications. This was the case throughout the reign of the Bourbon dynasty—even before the Hispanization reforms. In a 1709 competition, for instance, six first-class *lengua* parishes were available, and none of these were granted to a priest who knew the local language very well as indicated by their language exam marks. In fact, four of these priests did not even take a language exam. The remaining two did poorly on their language exams but held doctorate degrees.[42] The fact that these clerics barely knew the languages spoken in their assigned parishes was apparently of little concern to the authorities who granted them.

Despite reformers' claims that vast swaths of parish priests were acquiring benefices solely on the strength of their language skills, in reality only a very few clerics managed to pull this off. Moreover, the benefices such priests attained were almost always undesirable. For example, in his *terna* for the 1799 benefice competition, Archbishop Nuñez de Haro y Peralta described José Leandro Cabezas as having "orderly conduct." Leandro had also earned a grade of "first" on his Nahuatl exam. These were his only assets, though: he had never held his own benefice, and received a low mark of "third" on his *suficiencia* test.[43] The priest's language skills must have factored into authorities' decision to select Cabezas for the benefice of Tlachichilco, for he had little else working in his favor. However, Tlachichilco was a remote third-class parish in

[42] AGN, BN 338, exp. 2 (1709-10).
[43] AGN, BN 577, exp. 1 (1796-1800).

modern-day Veracruz, distant from Mexico City and from other urban centers. Cabezas's Nahuatl skills earned him a benefice, but it was hardly an ideal one.

Even before the Bourbon Hispanization reforms, priests with little to offer beyond language skills tended to end up with difficult and undesirable parish posts. This trend affected clerics ordained *a título de idioma* in particular. The 1709-10 competition offered three parishes classified as "least desirable," according to Taylor's data: Tenango del Río, far south-west of Mexico City in what is now Guerrero; Coyuca, also in Guerrero; and Tolcayuca, north of the capital in modern-day Hidalgo. One additional benefice (Atotonilco el Chico) was a highly undesirable, remote third-class parish, also located in distant Hidalgo. All four of these remote, unpleasant benefices went to priests ordained *a título de idioma*, who knew the designated languages of their new parishes. None of these clerics did especially well on their *suficiencia* exams—two received a grade of "second," and the other two earned "third." I have no further information on one of these priests, since his *méritos* are unavailable. The remaining three had experience as *vicarios*, but had never held their own benefices.[44] With little else to offer beyond their ability to speak a native language, these clerics all received parish posts—but the ones they received were the worst the archbishopric had to offer that year.

The *título de idioma* priests who highlighted their parish experience, suffering and perseverance in their *méritos* tended to received the archbishopric's least comfortable benefices, despite the value of experience on the clerical job market. For instance, Bernardino Pablo López de Escovedo, whose 1749 *méritos* I described in Chapter One,

[44] AGN, BN 338, exp. 2 (1709-10).

devoted most of his resume to portraying himself as an underdog hero who overcame excessively difficult circumstances to save his parishioners' souls. A poor priest with limited education who had no choice but to seek ordination *a título de idioma*, López de Escovedo had little to offer beyond his perseverance and his ability to speak Otomi and Nahuatl. His tales of arduous labor and dedication garnered him the benefice of Oapan—a remote third-class parish in what is now Guerrero, and one of the archbishopric's least desirable benefices.[45] Once again, a priest's linguistic abilities earned him a parish, but not a pleasant one.

Although language skills could not necessarily help a priest acquire a desirable benefice, knowing a language did not hurt, either. As I demonstrated in Chapter One, clerics who were wealthy and well-educated sometimes mentioned their language skills in their *méritos*—not because they had to, but rather to pad their resumes and prove their academic ability. Indeed, wealthy and well-educated *curas* who learned Nahuatl, Otomi or Mazahua frequently did well in benefice competitions. Their ability to speak a native language does not appear to have ruined their chances at acquiring a desirable benefice. For instance, the 1749 benefice competition offered two good, first-class parishes: Texcalyacac and Ocoyoacac, both located in what is now the State of Mexico. Both went to priests who knew the language of the parish. Juan Francisco de Torrescano, who received the benefice of Tescaliacac, had a doctorate and was generally impressive academically, and he also happened to know Nahuatl (according to his language exam grade, at least—but, as previously mentioned, his parishioners begged to differ). The

[45] AGN, BN 199, exp. 12 (1749).

aforementioned cleric who was appointed to Ocoyoacac, Juan Manuel de Cea, not only had years of experience in difficult parishes, he was also a native speaker of Otomi—and, if his language exam grade of "first" is any indication, he knew it very well.[46] It is difficult to tell whether these men's language skills helped them attain their good benefices, but at the very least, their linguistic abilities did not ruin their chances.

Even after 1770, it was possible for clerics who spoke native languages to find placement in attractive benefices. For instance, of the four benefices in the 1796 competition that were categorized as "most desirable," two went to clergymen who knew the local language. One of these men, José Manuel de Sotomayor, had no graduate degree, the archbishop deemed his conduct merely "regular," and he was even ordained *a título de idioma*. His *méritos* noted that he had been too poor to afford all the public thesis defenses and debates in which he had hoped to participate. Although Sotomayor had substituted for various university professors, he only managed a "second" on his 1796 *suficiencia* exam. Like many *lengua* clerics, he studied Nahuatl only because he had no *capellanía* and could not afford to support his own ordination. His 25 years of experience—some in difficult parishes—was most likely what earned him the desirable benefice of Jonacatepec, located in what is now Morelos.[47] Neither Sotomayor's language skills nor his poverty, nor even his ordination *a título de idioma* deterred royal and ecclesiastical authorities from granting him this highly sought-after parish.

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[46] *Ibid*.
[47] AGN, BN 577, exp. 1 (1796-1800).

Linguistic ability could also help make up for slight shortfalls in education or experience, even after the Hispanization reforms. Clerics who were generally qualified but lacked a doctorate or some other evidence of their academic prowess sometimes learned a language to prove their commitment to learning. This tactic sometimes worked well. For example, Agustín Ángeles, who spoke three indigenous languages—Nahuatl, Otomi and Mazahua—managed to attain San Juan del Río, a first-class parish near the urban center of Querétaro, and one of the best benefices available in the 1807 competition. Ángeles did not have an impressive education; he had only a bachelor's degree, and earned a mark of "second" on his *suficiencia* exam. However, he had served as a parish priest for an impressive 38 years, and Archbishop Francisco Javier de Lizana y Beaumont noted in his *terna* that Ángeles was "the best Mazahua speaker of all the ecclesiastics in this diocese"—a seemingly odd remark, given that the prelate was recommending him for San Juan del Río, an Otomi-speaking parish.[48] Lizana y Beaumont must have seen Ángeles's impressive Mazahua skills as an asset—one that could not merit a comfortable benefice on its own, but, combined with Ángeles's extensive experience, could make up for his limited education. Language skills could sometimes earn a parish priest a desirable benefice, but only under the right circumstances.

[48] AGN, IV, Caja 4609, exp. 28 (1807).

## REGIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

While royal and ecclesiastical officials for the most part sought to ensure that priests who had earned a top benefice received one, in some cases they based assignments on factors other than parish desirability. Sometimes examiners, archbishops and viceroys made these decisions based primarily on imperial strategy. This was the reason they assigned Bernardo Sánchez Hurtado de Mendoza to the benefice of Real del Doctor in 1799. Sánchez Hurtado, whose 1798 *méritos* I described in Chapter One, was relatively poor and not very well educated. He had only a bachelor's degree, and received just "third" on his *suficiencia* exam. However, he was a linguistic master: he spoke Nahuatl, Mazahua, and his native Otomi fluently. In his resume, Sánchez Hurtado emphasized his experience subjecting unruly indigenous peoples to royal and ecclesiastical authority by way of various indigenous languages. He claimed that, using prayers and exhortations in his parishioners' own languages, he had persuaded the previously unruly and rebellious indigenous peoples of Huayacocotla (in modern-day Veracruz) to obey both Church and Crown. According to Sánchez Hurtado's *méritos*, this accomplishment earned him praise from a colonel and troops inspector from the royal army. Yet in the *terna* for the 1799 competition, the archbishop noted that his conduct was merely "regular."[49]

Although Sánchez Hurtado had a fair bit of parish experience, it seems that his linguistic prowess was his most valuable asset. His experience pacifying indigenous peoples using various native tongues would have been handy in Real del Doctor, a

[49] AGN, BN 577, exp. 1 (1796-1800).

remote parish in what is now Hidalgo, well north of Mexico City in the Sierra Gorda region. Real del Doctor was located near Zimápan, an important mining town. Given that silver mining underpinned much of New Spain's surging economy during the 18th and early 19th centuries, royal authorities surely considered it important to maintain order in these areas. The previous actions of royal officials certainly suggest as much: when workers from mines and refining mills in Guanajuato rebelled in 1767, Viceroy José de Gálvez moved swiftly to solve the problem by introducing militias.[50]

Indeed, correspondence between Sánchez Hurtado and Viceroy José de Iturrigaray indicates that the viceroy sought to strengthen royal and ecclesiastical control over Real del Doctor. In 1804, five years after becoming Real del Doctor's parish priest, Sánchez Hurtado reported to Iturrigaray that most of his native parishioners still refused to observe the sacraments. The *cura* noted that the local population was constantly moving and changing due to the labor requirements of the local silver mines, and complained that gambling, drunkenness, thievery and cohabitation were common. Conditions would not improve anytime soon: in 1805, Sánchez Hurtado wrote to the viceroy again, warning that his indigenous parishioners were rebellious, and in 1807 he told Iturrigaray that the natives were insolent and had no respect for him. Continuing their tradition of rebellion, all of Real del Doctor's indigenous residents sided with the insurgents when the war for independence began in 1810.[51] I do not have access to any letters Iturrigaray might have written in response to Sánchez Hurtado; however, the fact

[50] Brading, *Miners and Merchants*, 233-235.
[51] Eric Van Young, *The Other Rebellion: Popular Violence, Ideology, and the Mexican Struggle for Independence, 1810-1821* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 207.

that the priest frequently reported to the viceroy is telling. Iturrigaray must have hoped that Real del Doctor's *cura* would maintain order in the area, thereby protecting local mining interests.

Although Sánchez Hurtado failed to subdue the indigenous residents of Real del Doctor, it is clear that the viceroy, archbishop and examiners selected him for his language skills and experience in pacifying rebellious natives. Going by their usual standards, Sánchez Hurtado did not qualify for the benefice. Real del Doctor was probably a second- or third-class parish, but his limited education and mediocre reputation could not have guaranteed him even an undesirable parish post.[52] But because Real del Doctor's residents were mine workers and had rebellious tendencies, Sánchez Hurtado's proven ability to work with difficult parishioners in Otomi was more important than his other qualifications—and more important than the Hispanization laws.

Sánchez Hurtado's placement in Real del Doctor is the only case I found that points definitively to concerns over indigenous rebellion as the rationale behind the placement of *curas*. In general, however, the archbishopric's more remote parishes were more likely than central ones to receive a priest who spoke the local language. This tendency only applies to the period after 1770: as previously mentioned, before that time, the vast majority of the archbishopric's benefices went to men who spoke the parish's designated language. Of the 46 *lengua* benefices available after 1770 that were assigned to *curas* who did not know the local language, I was able to locate 36. Of these, 12 were

[52] Taylor notes that Real del Doctor was a second-class parish in 1744 and a third-class parish in 1775. Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred*, 489. One might expect from this trajectory that the benefice was third-class by the time Sánchez Hurtado received the benefice in 1799. However, it is possible that the area's mining fortunes raised its salary and class level.

clustered in the immediate vicinity of Mexico City.[53] An additional 15 were located within approximately 50 miles of the capital.[54] Only ten benefices were further away, nearly all of which were in the distant northern and northeastern parts of the Archbishopric, in Querétaro, Hidalgo and Veracruz.[55] Meanwhile, of the 26 parishes granted to a *cura* who *did* know the language (25 of which I was able to locate), only one was in the immediate vicinity of Mexico City.[56] An additional 11 were in an approximate 50-mile radius of the capital, and the other 15 were further away, in the more distant parts of the State of Mexico, Hidalgo, Morelos, Veracruz and Querétaro.[57] Thus, authorities

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[53] These 12 parishes in the immediate vicinity of Mexico City were San Cristóbal Ecatepec, 1788 (State of Mexico); Tlalnepantla, 1788 (State of Mexico); Tepexpan, 1788 (State of Mexico); Tlalnepantla Cuautenca, 1796 (State of Mexico); Ixtapaluca, 1796 (State of Mexico); Xochimilco, 1796 (Federal District); Coyoacán, 1799 (Federal District); Chiautla, 1800 (State of Mexico); Mixquic, 1807 (Federal District); Tacuba, 1807 (located in what is now the Federal District); Iztacalco, 1807 (Federal District); and Cuautitlán, 1810 (State of Mexico). AGN, IV Caja 152, exp. 15 (1788); AGN, BN 577, exp. 1 (1796-1800); and AGN, IV Caja 4609, exp. 28 (1807).

[54] Ocoyoacac, 1796 (State of Mexico); Xiutepec, 1796 (Morelos); Singuilican, 1796 (Hidalgo); Lerma, 1799 (State of Mexico); Atotonilco el Grande, 1799 (Hidalgo); Calimaya, 1799 (State of Mexico); Real de Sultepec, 1799 (State of Mexico); Tepeapulco, 1799 (Hidalgo); Tezontepec, 1800 (Hidalgo); Chapa de Mota, 1800 (State of Mexico); Mixquiahuala, 1800 (Hidalgo); Tenancingo, 1800 (State of Mexico); Acambay, 1807 (State of Mexico); Ayapango, 1807 (State of Mexico); and Yautepec, 1807 (Morelos). AGN, BN 577, exp. 1 (1796-1800) and AGN, IV Caja 4609, exp. 28 (1807).

[55] Real de Zimapan, 1788 (Hidalgo); Xochicoatlán, 1799 (Hidalgo); Tantima, 1799 (Veracruz); Acapulco, 1800 (Guerrero); San Sebastián de Querétaro, 1800 (Querétaro); Pánuco, 1800 (Veracruz); Tolimán, 1807 (Querétaro); Xochiatipan, 1810 (Hidalgo); Real de Jacala, 1810 (Hidalgo); and Acamixtla, 1810 (Guerrero). AGN, IV Caja 152, exp. 15 (1788); AGN, BN 577, exp. 1 (1796-1800); AGN, IV Caja 4609, exp. 28 (1807); and AGN, IV Caja 676, exp. 1 (1810).

[56] Iztapalapa, 1788 (Federal District). AGN, IV Caja 152, exp. 15 (1788).

[57] Benefices within a 50-mile radius of the capital that received a priest who spoke the local language were: Tizayuca, 1796 (Hidalgo); Xalatlaco, 1799 (State of Mexico); Xochitepec, 1799 (Morelos); Ocuituco, 1800 (Morelos); Xaltocan, 1800 (State of Mexico); San Francisco Ixtlahuaca, 1800 (State of Mexico); Tolcayuca, 1807 (Hidalgo); Tepexoyuca, 1807 (State of Mexico); Temoaya, 1807 (State of Mexico); Texcalyacac, 1807 (State of Mexico); and Villa del Carbón, 1810 (State of Mexico). AGN, BN 577, exp. 1 (1796-1800); AGN, IV Caja 4609, exp. 28 (1807); and AGN, IV Caja 676, exp. 1 (1810).
The 15 more distant parishes were: Xochicoatlán, 1788 (Hidalgo); Jonacatepec, 1796 (Morelos); Acamixtla, 1796 (Guerrero); Tulancingo, 1796 (Hidalgo); Xantetelco, 1799 (Morelos); Real de Zacualpan, 1799 (State of Mexico); Apaxtla, 1799 (Guerrero); Tlachichilco, 1799 (Veracruz); Real del Doctor, 1799 (Hidalgo): Ocuituco, 1800 (Morelos); Teloloapan, 1800 (Guerrero); Amatepec y Tlatlaya, 1807 (State of Mexico); San Juan del Río, 1807 (Querétaro); Real de Zimapan, 1807 (Hidalgo); and Huichapan, 1810

assigned about 60% of the benefices that were distant from the capital to a priest who could speak the local language. Meanwhile, the opposite was the case near the capital: nearly every *lengua* benefice extremely close to Mexico City (92% of them) ended up with a *cura* who did not know the language.

The above statistics are far from exact, given that they pertain to only a select few benefice competitions, and also given that it was not possible to locate every benefice. Nevertheless, they point to a general trend: although officials were certainly willing to grant remote parishes to clerics who could not communicate with their parishioners, they were relatively unlikely to do so. It is unclear whether location was the deciding factor in any of these situations: given that third-class parishes were often distant from the capital, and given that *lengua* clerics were generally more likely to be undereducated, these trends in parish location may well result from the tendency to grant benefices based on education and parish desirability. Moreover, some parishes received a *lengua* cleric at one time and a monolingual one at another. For instance, in 1788 Real de Zimapan, an Otomi-speaking parish in Hidalgo, received a new parish priest who did not speak Otomi. In 1807, however, the same benefice was granted to a cleric who *did* know the language.[58] It thus seems unlikely that royal and ecclesiastical authorities always prioritized granting distant parishes to priests who spoke the language. They might have worried sometimes that native parishioners in remote areas might be left without spiritual instruction if their *cura* did not speak their language. For reasons that are unclear, this

(Hidalgo). AGN, IV Caja 152, exp. 15 (1788); AGN, BN 577, exp. 1 (1796-1800); AGN, IV Caja 4609, exp. 28 (1807); and AGN, IV Caja 676, exp. 1 (1810).

[58] AGN, IV Caja 152, exp. 15 (1788) and AGN, IV Caja 4609, exp. 28 (1807).

seems to have mattered to royal and ecclesiastical officials in some cases, but not in others.

The significance of the parish to imperial economic interests might have helped to determine whether authorities granted it to a priest who knew the local language. In particular, benefices in important mining regions were somewhat likely to receive a *cura* who knew the language of the area. Including Real del Doctor, the benefice competitions I examined from after 1770 offered seven parishes in mining areas. Of these, two received a priest who knew the language of his parishioners: Real del Doctor (Hidalgo) and Real de Zacualpan (State of Mexico). Another three—Tecicapan (Hidalgo), Tenancingo (State of Mexico) and Real de Sultepec (State of Mexico)—went to clerics who could not speak the language. Another two benefices, Real de Zimápan (Hidalgo) and Acamixtla (Guerrero), went back and forth: Zimapán received a priest who knew the local language in 1788, but one who did not in 1807; meanwhile, Acamixtla went to a *lengua* priest in 1796 but not in 1810. Tecicapan, Tenancingo, Real de Sultepec and Zimápan all had very high salaries and were highly desirable benefices. Therefore, even if royal and ecclesiastical authorities thought it wise to commit *lengua* priests to mining benefices, in these cases the prerogative to grant the best parishes to well-educated and otherwise worthy clerics might have won over.[59]

Given the relatively small number of benefices granted to linguistically-skilled clerics after the Hispanization reforms, the fact that *lengua* priests received nearly half of

[59] AGN, IV Caja 152, exp. 15 (1788); AGN, BN 577, exp. 1 (1796-1800); AGN, IV Caja 4609, exp. 28 (1807); and AGN, IV Caja 676, exp. 1 (1810).

the mining parishes is telling. In some cases, royal and ecclesiastical authorities may have hoped to protect mining interests from indigenous rebellion, as in Real del Doctor. They may have thought it wise to provide such benefices with *curas* who could speak directly with indigenous parishioners, in order to persuade them to work in the mines or to adhere to the Catholic faith. This seems to have occurred only occasionally, though. Although officials sometimes placed linguistically skilled clerics in mining regions, they for the most part preferred to assign benefices based on candidates' education, experience and reputation.

Viceroys, archbishops and examiners may also have doled out parish posts based in part on *curas*' familiarity with the region. Many priests made note in their *méritos* of where they had previously worked, and many of these clergymen worked in the same general region of the archbishopric multiple times.[60] For example, Marcos Reynel Hernández noted in his 1739 *méritos* that he had served as parish priest of Real y Minas de Zacualpan, San Matheo Texcaliacac and then Real y Minas de Temascaltepec—all located southwest of Mexico City in what is now the State of Mexico.[61] These parishes were not especially proximate; about 60-80 miles separated each of them. But given the enormous size of the archbishopric, it is fair to say that these three benefices were located in the same general area—a region that Reynel must have known relatively well. Similarly, the aforementioned Bernardo Sánchez Hurtado received the benefice of Real del Doctor after "pacifying" parishioners in Huayacocotla, in the Huasteca region of

[60] This tendency was probably less marked in the Archbishopric of Mexico than in the Diocese of Guadalajara. There, as William Taylor demonstrates, *curas* tended to gravitate towards the same part of the diocese for most of their careers. Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred*, 101.
[61] Marcos Reynel Hernández, AGN, BN 603, exp. 12 (1739).

Veracruz.[62] Both Real del Doctor and Huayacocotla were located in the northeastern part of the archbishopric, where royal and ecclesiastical officials might have assumed that indigenous peoples had similar customs and tendencies. It might have seemed wise to place Sánchez Hurtado in Real del Doctor in part due to his previous experience working with rebellious parishioners in that same region.

Although some priests spent much of their careers in the same part of the archbishopric, this was hardly the case for every *cura*. Moreover, spending time in one area was no guarantee of further work in the same region. José de Ortega attained the benefice of Tolimanejo, located in modern-day Querétaro, after working as a *vicario* just 30 miles away in San Juan del Río. However, in 1800 he would receive the benefice of Tezontepec, in what is now Hidalgo—still north of Mexico City, but a fair distance from his Querétaro parishes.[63] Much like other regional factors, a cleric's familiarity with the area was probably secondary to other considerations, such as the desirability of the available parishes and candidates' education.

## CONCLUSION

Although after 1770, archbishops, viceroys and ecclesiastical examiners continued to take candidates' language skills into account when assigning benefices, this should not be taken as an indication that the Hispanization effort was contradictory, or that these individuals disobeyed language reform orders. As demonstrated in Chapter

[62] Bernardo Sánchez Hurtado, AGN, BN 1153, exp. 1 (1798).
[63] AGN, BN 577, exp. 1 (1796-1800).

Three, discouraging the placement of clerics solely based on language skills was part of a broader project to reform the clergy and "improve" indigenous subjects. One of the goals of reformers like Lorenzana was to ensure that merit—especially education—was the primary factor determining whether clerics received benefices, and which ones they received. In other words, these men saw language reform not as an end in itself, but as a means to a complete imperial transformation, especially a more educated and refined clergy. Immediately ceasing to consider language competency as part of the process of assigning benefices was not necessarily conducive to this goal. As I will demonstrate in the following chapter, many royal and ecclesiastical officials saw partial or gradual Hispanization of ecclesiastical administration as a much more effective means to clerical reform. Thus, in order to evaluate whether the language reforms succeeded, it is necessary to also consider whether Hispanization produced the desired changes in the clergy.

Yet the secular priesthood changed little. Although in some cases royal and ecclesiastical authorities deemed other factors (such as economic interests and the risk of rebellion) more important, in general priests who had "earned" a good benefice by way of education, experience or reputation were highly likely to receive one. This was the case both before and after the Bourbon Reforms. At least as early as 1709, clerics with impressive educations, years of experience or distinguished posts had the best chance of attaining a benefice, and especially of attaining a desirable one that provided a comfortable living. Despite complaints from Lorenzana, Charles III and others that too many clerics received benefices based on their language skills rather than merit, merit

had already been the number one criteria determining parish priests' career paths for decades. Although linguistic ability became a much less important factor after 1770, this did little to alter the overall criteria for who received the archbishopric's best benefices. The most educated priests with the most experience were still the most likely to land the more desirable parishes.

Despite this focus on merit, however, benefice assignments did not conform to the desires of Lorenzana and his reformist colleagues. The royal and ecclesiastical authorities who were in charge of the benefice competitions I examined believed that "merit" encompassed not only education and "good customs," but also parish experience and reputation among both parishioners and authority figures. In other words, their definition of "merit" did not match up precisely with that of Lorenzana and other reformers, who believed good education to be an essential component. Consequently, many parish priests were not especially well educated. Both before and after the Hispanization reforms, clerics with extensive experience but limited learning were very likely to obtain a desirable parish post. Moreover, those without experience, reputation, or education could, in many cases, obtain a benefice—just not a very good one.

This was especially the case in the archbishopric's more remote parishes, which were often undesirable. Beyond the immediate vicinity of Mexico City, parish assignments remained much as before. There, royal and ecclesiastical authorities placed *curas* based on education, reputation, experience, parish desirability, and sometimes the cleric's familiarity with the region. They also tried to ensure that *curas* of these more remote parishes could speak the local language. Priests who received benefices closer to

the capital, on the other hand, were far less likely to know the local language—but, an undereducated cleric could still land one of these benefices, so long as he had enough experience to warrant it. The Hispanization reforms were most effective near Mexico City, but even here parish assignments were not guided by Lorenzana's conception of merit.

Lorenzana's goals for the clergy were never realized in part because he misjudged the relationship between clerics' language skills, on the one hand, and their theological prowess, wealth and "customs" on the other. Based on the clerical language ideology that linked poorly bred, undereducated priests with native languages, the pro-Hispanization reformers of the late 1760s and early 1770s assumed that reducing the importance of language competency in parish priests' careers would help reform the clergy. The priesthood's lack of learning seemed to be due primarily to the fact that so many men became priests and attained benefices based on their language skills. These reformers were mistaken. Although many *lengua* priests did have limited education and wealth, this was also the case for plenty of clerics who did not speak a native language. Perhaps more importantly, although clerics could become ordained by way of language, only rarely could their language skills alone garner them any benefice at all, let alone a good one. At least as early as 1709, language competency had been secondary to parish priests' other qualifications. The notion that vast swaths of undereducated clergymen were stealing away benefices solely because they spoke Nahuatl or Otomi was a straw man—a myth based on language ideology far more than reality.

It is unclear why Lorenzana and his reformist colleagues made this mistake. It is possible that, as *peninsulares* who had lived only a short time in New Spain, they had insufficient knowledge of how and why clerics acquired benefices. This is unlikely, however: as prelates or viceroys, Lorenzana, the Marquis de Croix and Fabián y Fuero all would have participated directly in the process of selecting *curas* for benefices. Perhaps language competency more often determined benefice assignments during the 1760s, when these men were in power; as previously mentioned, the competitions I examined do not cover this particular period.

More likely is that reformers' ideas stemmed only in part from reality, the other part from their own preconceptions and prejudices. It was certainly common enough for men who spoke Nahuatl but had limited academic prowess to receive benefices. This evidence would have fit nicely with reformers' idea that learning Spanish would help indigenous peoples interact more with Spaniards, which was essential for their "improvement." Thus, a few reports, pastoral visits, conversations with other prelates, and experiences with benefice competitions were probably enough to convince Lorenzana and his colleagues that *lengua* clerics were themselves the problem.

This chapter has neglected to address one significant question: How did the Hispanization reforms affect parish life, particularly for parishioners who did not speak Spanish? Petitions like the one mentioned in this chapter suggest that priests' language competency might have been important to native parishioners in two ways. First, some probably felt that it was critical to have a *cura* who spoke their language if they were to learn Christian doctrine and receive all the necessary sacraments. Second, if parishioners

were in any way dissatisfied with their parish priest, his inability to speak their language could serve as a bargaining chip in their litigation against him. Although it is unclear whether the Hispanization reforms had any effect on their ability to use a *cura*'s linguistic inability against him, it would not be terribly surprising. Although the reforms probably had limited repercussions for most clergymen in the Archbishopric of Mexico, they might have been more consequential for the indigenous peoples who had relied upon clerics' language competency for spiritual guidance and to litigate against their parish priests.

# Chapter Five: Language Policy and Ecclesiastical Authority at the Collegiate Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe

The story of the Virgin of Guadalupe—a Mexican incarnation of the Virgin Mary—is instantly familiar to any Mexican. According to legend, she first appeared in 1531 at the hill of Tepeyac, just north of Mexico City. There, an indigenous man named Juan Diego saw a vision of the Virgin; she proceeded to cure his dying uncle and also appeared miraculously on Juan Diego's cloak to help prove her existence to the bishop.[1] The story of this miracle served as the basis for what eventually became a widespread devotional cult. Today Guadalupe's image permeates Mexican culture, and thousands flock to the site at Tepeyac every December 12 to celebrate the Virgin and worship before her miraculous image.[2]

Less well-known is that Tepeyac played a critical role in the history of both language policy and ecclesiastical reform in Bourbon Mexico. In 1749, royal officials founded at Tepeyac a collegiate church devoted to the Virgin of Guadalupe, which they hoped would serve as the institutional heart of her burgeoning cult. Although the site had housed some form of church or shrine for the Virgin for ages, the Colegiata de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe (Collegiate Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe)—or, as many called

[1] William Taylor, *Shrines & Miraculous Images: Religious Life in Mexico Before the Reforma* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2010), 99-100.

[2] Cornelius Conover and William Taylor argue that official promotion of the Virgin by royal authorities played a substantial role in her rise to prominence. Taylor, *Shrines & Miraculous Images*, 95-138 and Cornelius Conover, "Reassessing the Rise of Mexico's Virgin of Guadalupe, 1650s-1780s," *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 27 (2011): 251-279.

it, the Colegiata—served the Virgin's devotees on a much grander scale.[3] From the institution's founding until the end of the colonial period, royal and ecclesiastical authorities debated vociferously whether the collegiate church's chapter members (high-ranking clerics) should speak native tongues, and how best to put linguistic and religious reforms into practice at this new institution. These debates are the subject of this chapter.

The Spanish Crown's language policy for the Colegiata presents a curious paradox. By the 1750s, the Bourbon language reforms had begun: royal policymakers and archbishops had ordered officials to ensure that indigenous peoples throughout the empire learned Spanish. This tendency would only increase over the next two decades. As Chapter Three demonstrated, Hispanization policies became increasingly radical in the late 1760s and early 1770s, due in no small part to the influence of Archbishop Lorenzana. Finally, in 1770 King Charles III banned priests from speaking native tongues to their parishioners and asked bishops to refrain from assigning parishes based on clerics' language skills. Yet during this very same reform period of the mid- to late-18th century, royal authorities encouraged the use of native tongues at the Colegiata. As of the early 1750s, the Spanish Crown required half of the collegiate church's prebendaries (lower-ranked chapter members) and *merced* and *gracia* canons (highest-ranked chapter members) to know a native tongue—a requirement that was unique among such institutions in the viceroyalty.[4]

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[3] Collegiate churches were of considerable importance: although not designated as cathedrals, they had chapters of canons just as cathedrals did, which gave these institutions an air of distinction and a substantial role in the Catholic Church bureaucracy.

[4] Although the Colegiata was the only church that had a specific royal language requirement, some universities—such as the Colegio de Tepozotlán—had similar policies. AGN, BN 1111, exp. 16.

Despite its apparent inconsistency with the Crown's other language laws, Spain's monarchs and various royal and ecclesiastical authorities devoted considerable effort to defending the Colegiata's language policy and ensuring that it remained in effect throughout the rest of the colonial period. In other words, the very same men who ordered the extinction of New Spain's native tongues also fought hard to ensure that these tongues occupied a central role at the Virgin of Guadalupe's collegiate church—a discrepancy that challenges Bourbon reformers' outdated reputation for heavy-handed enforcement and ruthless inflexibility.[5]

Why did royal ministers and ecclesiastics fight so hard to maintain a law for the Colegiata that appeared to contradict broader reform efforts? The few studies on Guadalupe or the collegiate church rarely mention the institution's language policy, and the few that do have tended to answer this question by taking the word of King Ferdinand VI at face value.[6] The monarch's stated purpose for the Colegiata's language law was to

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[5] Numerous other historians have shown that Bourbon royal authorities were far more flexible than older studies suggested. See for instance John L. Phelan, "Authority and Flexibility in the Spanish Imperial Bureaucracy," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 15 (1960): 47-65 and Michael C. Scardaville, "(Hapsburg) law and (Bourbon) Order: State Authority, Popular Unrest, and the Criminal Justice System in Bourbon Mexico City," *The Americas* 50 (1994): 501-525.

[6] Studies that either neglect to mention the Colegiata's language policy or only mention it briefly include: Taylor, *Shrines & Miraculous Images*; Stafford Poole, *Our Lady of Guadalupe: The Origins and Sources of a Mexican National Symbol, 1531-1797* (Tuscon: University of Arizona Press, 1995); Ignacio Carrillo y Pérez, "La Real Colegiata," in *Nuevos Testimonios Históricos Guadalupanos*, Vol. 2, ed. Ernesto de la Torre Villar and Ramiro Navarro de Anda Carrillo y Pérez (México, D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2007), 182-203; Delfina López Sarrelangue, "La Villa de Guadalupe" in *Ibid.*, 127-151; Jaques Lafaye, *Quetzalcoatl and Guadalupe: The Formation of Mexican National Consciousness* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); and D.A. Brading, *Mexican Phoenix: Our Lady of Guadalupe: Image and Tradition Across Five Centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). Scholars who have taken Ferdinand VI's explanation of the Colegiata's language policy at face value include Gustavo Watson Marrón and D. A. Brading. Watson Marrón contends that figures like Ferdinand VI and Charles III supported Colegiata's language policy because they took seriously their roles as Catholic saviors, and thus felt responsible for the spiritual wellbeing of their vassals. In this way, he writes, "the presence of *el indígena* in Guadalupe did determine the course of this sanctuary in some respects." Similarly, David

pander to Guadalupe's cult, in part because it was "so worthy of the veneration of the faithful," and in part because the devotion of the "primitive natives" for the Virgin's miraculous image "shines with tenderness and edification…"[7] In keeping with the king's explanation, Gustavo Watson Marrón has argued that the collegiate church's language policy was a way of ensuring that the spiritual needs of the Virgin's large indigenous following were taken care of.

I challenge this interpretation by demonstrating that the Colegiata's native-language requirements were not a concession to indigenous worshippers so much as an attempt to regulate their religious practices. An extensive body of scholarship on the Virgin of Guadalupe has illuminated the development of her cult and, in particular, her relation to the rise of creole patriotism in the 17th and 18th centuries.[8] Rather than continuing with this same line of inquiry, this chapter pursues a less thoroughly explored facet of her rise to prominence: the role Bourbon-era royal and ecclesiastical authorities saw for her in their new, reformed vision of New Spain. As outlined the Introduction and Chapter Three, during this period Bourbon ministers and reformist bishops sought to "improve" both the clergy and indigenous peoples; they hoped that a well-educated priesthood could help natives become better Catholics, and more rational and productive

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Brading states, "That the appointment of canons at the sanctuary was made conditional upon knowledge of Indian languages emphasizes the popular nature of the cult." Brading, "Tridentine Catholicism," 3 and Gustavo Watson Marrón, *El templo que unió a Nueva España: Historia del Santuario y Colegiata de Guadalupe, extramuros de México, en el siglo XVIII* (Miguel Ángel Porrua: México, 2012), 395-6.

[7] AGI México 2558, fs. 109v-110v.

[8] See for instance Brading, *Mexican Phoenix*; Brading, *The First America*; Conover, "Reassessing the Rise"; Poole, *Our Lady of Guadalupe*; Lafaye, *Quetzalcoatl and Guadalupe*; Taylor, *Shrines & Miraculous Images*; and William B. Taylor, "The Virgin of Guadalupe in New Spain: An Inquiry into the Social History of Marian Devotion," *American Ethnologist* 14 (1987): 9-33.

citizens. They sought to centralize and standardize political and ecclesiastical administration, not only restricting the independence of the clergy, but also ensuring that the clerical proletariat and the mendicant orders had limited influence over indigenous parishioners.

The Colegiata and its language policy were critical to these reform efforts. Reformist royal and ecclesiastical officials sought to use the collegiate church as a central hub for Guadalupan devotion, from which learned ecclesiastics of considerable rank could disseminate orthodox teachings and lead the Virgin's cult. They hoped that the new institution would transfer authority over Guadalupan worship from parish priests, friars and parishioners over to the Colegiata's chapter members—priests whose education, distinction, proximity to higher authorities, and high ranking in the Church hierarchy would bring Guadalupan rituals more closely under the control of the highest royal and ecclesiastical authorities. If these high ranking men of distinction spoke native tongues, then they could provide spiritual direction for indigenous worshippers on their own, rather than relying on more lowly and less educated ministers to do the translating for them.

The case of the Colegiata complicates the question of who supported the Bourbon initiative to eliminate native tongues. The extensive disputes over the institution's language policy belies the standard narrative that peninsular royal authorities sought uniformly to eradicate native tongues, while creole priests rejected this reform effort.[9] No

[9] Heath, *Telling Tongues*; Tanck de Estrada, *Pueblos de indios y educación*; and Gonzalbo Aizpuru, *Historia de la educación*.

single form of allegiance—whether place of birth, institutional affiliation, or any other identity—determined individuals' opinions regarding language requirements for the collegiate church's prebendaries and canons. Even their own policies did not necessarily shape their attitudes toward native tongues at the Colegiata: figures such as King Charles III and Archbishop Rubio y Salinas actively promoted the extirpation of native tongues in other contexts, yet fought vigorously to ensure that the collegiate church's chapter members could speak these same tongues.

Throughout the Colegiata's colonial history, the extensive debates over its language policy reflected broader tensions between imperial reform measures and well-established language ideologies. This chapter reveals these tensions by using legislation, employment records for the collegiate church, priests' resumes, and correspondence between Church and royal authorities to reconstruct the development and implementation of royal language policy at the collegiate church. I begin with a brief overview of Guadalupe's cult—who worshipped the Virgin, the sometimes localized and informal nature of Guadalupan religious practices, and the Church's response to these sometimes unorthodox rituals. Next, I explore the creation of the Colegiata's language law and the ensuing controversies in chronological order, beginning in the late 1740s. Finally, this chapter examines the policy's implementation at the collegiate church.

If high-level ecclesiastics were to increase their jurisdiction over popular worship, they would need to speak to the masses directly, in whatever tongues the masses would understand. However, the clerical language ideology suggesting that *lengua* priests lacked education, wealth and distinction made this goal difficult to reach. How could

reformers reconcile their hope for ecclesiastical reform with *lengua* ministers' lowly reputation? Would appointing chapter members who spoke Nahuatl, Otomi or Mazahua help or hinder broader efforts to reform the Church? These are the questions royal and ecclesiastical officials worked through as they debated the language requirements for the collegiate church.

## GUADALUPE'S CULT: POPULAR DEVOTION AND OFFICIAL PROMOTION

Royal officials and prelates intended for the Colegiata to serve devotees to the Virgin of Guadalupe—a population that was growing, but not yet substantial when the collegiate church was founded in 1749. In the second half of the 18th century, the Virgin attracted increasing attention from creoles, *peninsulares*, and indigenous peoples alike, due in part to royal and ecclesiastical officials' considerable efforts to promote her as New Spain's patron saint. While plenty of Guadalupan rituals were directed by colonial authorities, others were conducted by individuals or communities, without even the supervision of a priest. Officials sometimes tolerated these less standardized (and frequently indigenous) religious practices, but often preferred to rein them in, especially once the Bourbon reforms began in the second half of the 18th century. This was the context in which royal and ecclesiastical officials founded the collegiate church and forged its language policy: reformers were encouraging popular devotion to the Virgin, but were struggling to shape Guadalupan religious practices to their liking.

Contrary to older scholarship, recent studies have shown that Our Lady of Guadalupe did not rise to prominence until the mid-18th century—and her popularity arose due in no small part to promotion by royal and ecclesiastical authorities.[10] The Virgin's cult saw unprecedented growth after 1754, when Pope Benedict XIV announced the miracle of Guadalupe's apparition and recognized her as patroness of New Spain. Viceroys ordered celebrations of the Virgin every December 12 on an increasingly grand scale as time went on, and a 1756 royal decree ordered that all future wills must include a provision for Guadalupe's shrine. Moreover, after royal officials restricted alms collections for shrines considerably over the course of the 18th century, they made exceptions for the Virgin. Ecclesiastical authorities supported these measures to spread devotion to her: for instance, bishops released multiple circulars encouraging devotions to Guadalupe on the twelfth day of every month.[11] Priests, too, endorsed Guadalupe's cult in New Spain's parishes, and often encouraged natives in particular to see her as their spiritual mother. Some ecclesiastical officials also promoted indigenous devotion to the Virgin—especially Archbishop Lorenzana, who also venerated her himself.[12]

While colonial authorities encouraged indigenous peoples in particular to worship the Virgin, popular devotion to her in the 18th century was not primarily indigenous. William Taylor suggests that priests and ecclesiastical authorities "seem to have been aggressively promoting the cult of Guadalupe in the 18th century more than hurrying to

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[10] Taylor, *Shrines & Miraculous Images*; Conover, "Reassessing the Rise of Mexico's Virgin of Guadalupe"; and Edward Osowski, *Indigenous Miracles: Nahua Authority in Colonial Mexico* (Arizona: The University of Arizona Press, 2010).
[11] Taylor, *Shrines & Miraculous Images*, 124.
[12] *Ibid*., 126.

catch up with popular Indian devotion."[13] Guadalupan worship was likely more widespread among creoles and *peninsulares* than among indigenous peoples, and native interest in her was probably concentrated mostly in central Mexico. However, indigenous devotion to the Virgin became more pronounced beginning in the 1740s, especially in central, western, and north-central New Spain. In these areas, native communities erected more images and altars to her than before, and indigenous peoples increasingly named their children Guadalupe and noted the Virgin in their wills.[14]

Popular devotion to Guadalupe took a variety of forms, not all of which were orthodox in the eyes of royal and ecclesiastical officials. As viceroys and archbishops promoted devotion to the Virgin, religious practices associated with her became increasingly institutionalized. For instance, royal or ecclesiastical authorities initiated, directed, and/or sponsored many of the ritual events that occurred in Guadalupe's name. However, as institutional support grew, so too did popular enthusiasm. Devotees sometimes took worship into their own hands, forging their own rituals without the supervision of clerics or royal officials. As Taylor demonstrates, official efforts to encourage devotion to Guadalupe were "well received, but often taken in directions not intended or always welcomed by official promoters."[15]

Indeed, royal and ecclesiastical authorities did not look kindly upon natives who took Guadalupan worship into their own hands. A notable example is Francisco Diego, who appeared before the archbishop's court in 1728 to face charges of sacrilegious

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[13] Taylor, "The Virgin of Guadalupe in New Spain," 15.
[14] Taylor, *Shrines & Miraculous Images*, 125-127.
[15] *Ibid*., 124.

deception. Diego believed that the Virgin of Guadalupe had spoken to him through a copy of her image. The visionary claimed that the Virgin had promised to give him five pesos so he could buy adobe bricks and build her a chapel, and 100 pesos to buy fruit to give to the poor. She also gave Diego incense and a staff of authority to help him become *gobernador* of San Mateo Atenco, his community near Toluca, west of Mexico City. Diego's vision of the Virgin appealed to many fellow worshipers, but not to ecclesiastical authorities. His story drew substantial attention from locals (indigenous and non-indigenous alike), many of whom visited the visionary's house to meet him and learn more about the apparition. He showed his enraptured visitors a gourd bowl containing a marigold floating in water, and told them it was a precious relic, since he had used it to wipe perspiration from the Virgin's image after she appeared to him. Unfortunately for Diego, not all were convinced by his miraculous tale. The court punished him for what prosecutors saw as sacrilege, subjecting him to a public display of repentance, whipping and more.[16] Effectively, the court had ruled that indigenous parishioners did not have authority over popular devotion to the Virgin.

Not only indigenous peoples, but also creoles faced criticism for their informal and unregulated Guadalupan rituals. One such individual was Lucas Antonio Llañes, a Mexico City tanner's assistant who cared for a revered statue of the Virgin—the focal point of well-established local celebrations—and organized annual fiestas in her honor. Prior to the reorganization of Mexico City's parishes in 1772, the area where Llañes's Guadalupan celebrations took place fell within the boundaries of San Miguel parish;

[16] *Ibid*., 128-129.

afterwards, it became part of the new Santo Tomás parish. The statue, however, was stored in the Chapel of Ascensión, which was now in the parish of Santa Cruz y Soledad. In the wake of this administrative change, Llañes requested new licenses for his fiestas from Archbishop Haro y Peralta, and asked to move the image to Santo Tomás's parish church. But the *cura* of Santa Cruz y Soledad, Gregorio Pérez Cancio, discovered that Llañes's celebrations had been taking place without the supervision of a parish priest. Disapproving of the informal nature of these rituals, Pérez Cancio fought to keep the statue in his own parish.[17]

The disagreement between Llañes and Pérez Cancio was about far more than a statue. As Matthew O'Hara notes, "possession of the Virgin's image meant not just an inanimate object but control over the religious celebrations in her honor..."[18] Because Llañes's Guadalupan cult was "firmly embedded in the neighborhood and autonomous from the parish," Pérez Cancio called it a "false devotion," and claimed that its celebrations inspired "evil deeds and scandals," such as dancing, drinking and rowdiness. The priest kidnapped the statue, and Llañes begged the archbishop for its return, arguing that the image and its associated rituals belonged not to any parish or *cura*, but to himself, the image's devotees, and their community.[19] According to Llañes, the right to shape the Virgin's cult lay in the hands of local worshippers, not representatives of the Church. The priest, however, begged to differ.

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[17] O'Hara, *A Flock Divided*, 145-150.
[18] *Ibid*., 145.
[19] *Ibid*., 145-150.

Ecclesiastics responded in various ways to informal and unsupervised expressions of the Virgin's cult. Sometimes—as in Pérez Cancio's argument against Llañes, or the court's indictment of Francisco Diego—they reacted negatively, seeing these local forms of worship as unorthodox or too lacking in expert guidance. Yet in some cases, priests and ecclesiastical authorities tolerated popular rituals that occurred without clerical supervision. Perhaps surprisingly, Archbishop Nuñez de Haro y Peralta resolved the dispute over the Guadalupe statue in Llañes's favor. Effectively dismissing Pérez Cancio's accusations of misconduct and unorthodoxy, the prelate ordered the cleric to return the image so that Llañes could perform his community's celebrations.[20] Although Bourbon-era ecclesiastical officials were frequently concerned about popular, unstandardized religious practices, they did not uniformly reject them.

Despite this occasional tolerance, for the most part royal and ecclesiastical authorities became increasingly concerned about unsupervised Guadalupan rituals in the late 18th century. At this time, Bourbon ministers, reformist bishops and many urban elites sought with renewed vigor to reform Catholicism. As described in the Introduction, beginning in the 1760s, these individuals sought to replace the older, often grandiose baroque Catholicism with a new, more internal brand of Catholicism, called "new piety" or "enlightened piety." These religious reform efforts targeted indigenous devotional practices in particular, since these seemed to epitomize the unorthodoxies of baroque worship. Too exuberant, external and "Indian" for reformers' liking, popular rituals in native communities came under more scrutiny than ever before.

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[20] *Ibid*., 150.

Reformers likely saw the Virgin of Guadalupe's cult as an opportunity to reform these indigenous religious practices, since many natives had shown interest in her, but she was not yet widely popular. Prelates and royal officials must have hoped that, by leading and promoting the spread of Guadalupan devotion rather than trying to reform already-widespread devotional cults, they could help shape native rituals associated with the Virgin. As her popularity grew, indigenous devotees could learn to worship the Virgin in a state-sanctioned, "orthodox" manner by participating in institutionally-backed Guadalupan rituals and visiting the shrine at the Crown-controlled Colegiata. While this project must have grown increasingly appealing to reformers once the new piety movement began in the 1760s, it nevertheless served as the church's primary goal from the moment of its foundation in 1749. It was relatively rare for indigenous devotees to worship at the Colegiata; few pilgrimaged to Tepeyac from afar, and those who did generally focused on their own ceremonies. Yet royal and ecclesiastical authorities hoped nevertheless that the new institution would help mold popular worship.

## THE TUMULTUOUS FOUNDATION OF THE COLLEGIATE CHURCH: 1747-1751

The Colegiata was mired in controversy from the very beginning. Although Archbishop Manuel de Rubio y Salinas had technically founded it in 1749, it would not become a fully functioning institution for more than two years after that, due to a major

quarrel over its exemptions and privileges.[21] To make matters worse, the collegiate church's very existence elicited complaints from royal officials and priests, who expressed concerns that it might interfere with the religious practices of local indigenous peoples who worshipped at the shrine at Tepeyac. Indeed, the controversy reveals that the collegiate church did not merely provide an institutional expression and ceremonial center for Guadalupe's cult; rather, it forced the indigenous peoples of nearby Tlatelolco to relinquish what little authority they had over that cult. By granting native tongues a central role at the Colegiata, the king's ministers hoped to address these concerns and appease the collegiate church's primary detractors so that its chapter members could finally take office.

At least as early as 1747, numerous individuals had expressed concerns that the collegiate church might interfere with the religious practices of local indigenous peoples who worshipped at the shrine at Tepeyac. Sometime that year, the Colegiata's *apoderado* (legal agent) wrote to the Council of the Indies with a lengthy list of regulations he thought the collegiate church should observe, "so that the Indians conserve their devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe." Among numerous other rules, he suggested that ministers of the collegiate church must not prevent native worshippers from entering the presbytery to

[21] The Colegiata's abbot stipulated that the institution would have a number of special privileges, including exemption from the archbishop's jurisdiction. Archbishop Rubio y Salinas took issue with this privilege, and responded by claiming that the abbot had been romantically involved with a *mulata* prostitute. A lengthy dispute ensued between the archbishop, embittered by the Colegiata's exemption from his authority; the viceroy, who begged the archbishop to put aside his qualms and grant the institution's ministers their positions; and the abbot, incensed by the archbishop's defamation of his reputation. As a result, the Colegiata would not become a functioning institution with a full chapter until 1751. AGI, México, 2558, fs. 1-145 and México 2560, fs. 231-260; Carrillo y Pérez, "La Real Colegiata"; and López Sarrelangue, "La Villa de Guadalupe." See Watson Marrón, *El templo que unió a Nueva España*, 252-296 for a detailed overview of the conflict.

pray or visit the Virgin's image, or from dancing and singing.[22] Then, in 1747 or 1748, a group of ecclesiastics, together with Francisco Antonio de Echávarri, the *oidor decano* (senior judge of the *Real Audiencia*, the High Court), sent a letter to the *Cámara de Indias* that echoed the *apoderado*'s same requests.[23] These pleas from the *apoderado*, various clergymen, and the *oidor decano* Echávarri were only the earliest signs of what would become a significant movement of opposition to the Colegiata and its policies.

The Colegiata's primary opponent, the *oidor* Echávarri, was the first to suggest that the institution's chapter members should speak native tongues. In early 1750, Echávarri sent a letter to Archbishop Rubio y Salinas, arguing once again that the new institution would deprive the indigenous peoples of nearby Tlalnepantla access to the Virgin's shrine and spiritual guidance.[24] He lamented that, on the day that indigenous peoples celebrated Guadalupe's apparition, 16,000 to 20,000 native worshippers would pilgrimage to the shrine—most of whom had to return home without confessing, because

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[22] The *apoderado*'s list of suggestions was extensive and detailed. Some applied specifically to indigenous peoples who pilgrimaged from afar. For example, he argued that, on the day dedicated to celebrating the Virgin, the Colegiata's ministers should not prevent the natives "who come to the shrine from such remote parts on this day" from "staying to sleep in the cemetery, hermitages, and porticos, and making their fires, as they have always been accustomed to doing"; nor should they be prevented from "having their dances and festivities with which they show their devotion, nor from eating in the porticos, even if they leave them full of fruit peels…" AGI, México 2560, fs. 22r-24v. The previous archbishop, Juan Antonio de Vizarrón y Eguiarreta, had apparently shared these concerns. See AGI, México 2560, fs. 18-19.

[23] The *Cámara de Indias* was a subcouncil of the Council of the Indies, which itself was one of the king's advisory boards.

[24] In his 1750 letter to Archbishop Rubio y Salinas, Echávarri noted that the Santuario de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe (Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe) was a *pueblo de indios*—a village of Indians—and also the *cabecera* (head town) of a number of other nearby villages. The area had been designated as a Nahuatl-speaking parish, he wrote, but in addition, many Otomi-speaking natives lived in nearby Tlalnepantla. According to the oidor, few priests bothered to learn the Otomi language particularly well. As a result, he thought, "many Indians lack spiritual nourishment, due to the priest's minimal efforts." In Echávarri's eyes, the area's indigenous peoples already suffered from spiritual neglect; he feared that the foundation of the Colegiata would only worsen their dire situation. AHAM, BC, Caja 178, exp. 26 (referred to hereafter as "Caja 178, exp. 126."

the sanctuary had no ministers who spoke their languages. Moreover, the *oidor* wrote, "it is public and notorious that, since the miraculous Apparition [of the Virgin], the Indians have taken care of the cleaning and care of the Temple of this Divine Lady, attending all the functions in the Church, Sacristy and Choir…" Echávarri believed that the presence of the Colegiata would "deprive them of this desirable and pleasant exercise and, consequently, takes from them an immemorial possession of more than two centuries…" He also lamented that, because canons were very important in America, the collegiate church's ministers would look with disdain upon indigenous applicants for canonries.[25]

The area's indigenous peoples, as well as various friars, opposed the Colegiata's foundation for the same reason: it would endanger native religious practices associated with the Virgin. Native representatives from the pueblos of Guadalupe and Tlatelolco, as well as a number of Jesuits and other friars, had all complained to Echávarri that the new church restricted native access to the Virgin's shrine.[26] In 1751, the *gobernadores* of San Juan and Santiago Tlatelolco also presented their own petition against the foundation of the Colegiata on behalf of the natives who lived near Tepeyac, enraged that the Crown would take from them a cult they considered their own. The petition stated that the sacred image of the Virgin was the property of these indigenous peoples and that, if officials

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[25] *Ibid*. and Watson Marrón, *El templo que unió a Nueva España*, 269-271.

[26] Caja 178, exp. 26. Whether Echávarri—and especially the friars—opposed the Colegiata out of genuine interest in indigenous devotion is up for debate. Their qualms with the Colegiata could just have easily have emerged from concerns that the new institution might expedite the secularization reform. By taking full possession of the apparition site at Teyepac, the collegiate church claimed control over Guadalupe's cult, at least symbolically, if not in practice. Local friars could very well have interpreted this as a threat to their religious authority, especially over indigenous religious practices. By the time Echávarri wrote his letter to the archbishop in early 1750, the secularization process would have already begun; friars throughout the archbishopric were facing the possibility of losing control over their indigenous doctrinas, and thus also over religious life in New Spain. The friars who took issue with the collegiate church's foundation likely saw the institution as one more blow to their jurisdiction over popular worship.

insisted on establishing the new church, they should at least return the image so they could keep it in their own chapel. Moreover, they wrote, the Virgin had appeared for *them*—Juan Diego, the man who had witnessed Guadalupe's first apparition, was indigenous.[27] These local indigenous residents believed, therefore, that the Colegiata should have no jurisdiction over the Virgin's cult.

To limit these negative effects of the new collegiate church, Echávarri suggested that the institution should grant its four *de oficio* canonries (the upper strata of canonries) to the candidates who were the most skilled with the four aforementioned native tongues: Nahuatl, Tarascan, Otomi and Mixtec.[28] It would be better to take linguistically proficient candidates over more educated ones, he argued, because "it serves these *miserables* [wretched ones] little if the *oficio* canonries are learned in theology, canonical law or jurisprudence…" On the other hand, hiring chapter members who spoke native tongues would ensure that "the Indians [would] have the spiritual nourishment they so require."[29] Implementing this kind of language policy would at least ensure that the new church

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[27] Watson Marrón, *El templo que unió a Nueva España*, 287-297 and AGI, México 2560, fs. 231-260. For more on concerns regarding the Colegiata's potential impact upon local indigenous worship, see AGI, México 2560, fs. 22r-24v and Watson Marrón, *El templo que unió a Nueva España*, 226. The previous archbishop, Juan Antonio de Vizarrón y Eguiarreta, had apparently shared these concerns. See AGI, México 2560, fs. 18-19.

[28] Echávarri suggested these *lengua* canonries for the Colegiata as an alternative to an idea he much preferred: to use the funding for the Colegiata to build a convent for *indias caciques* (female indigenous lords) instead. Echávarri imagined that this convent would employ four chaplains who spoke one native language each (Nahuatl, Tarascan, Otomi and Mixtec) so that indigenous peoples who travelled there to worship the Virgin would have access to confession in their own tongues. It was too late to create a convent instead of a collegiate church, since the Colegiata had already been founded the previous year. Echávarri hoped that *lengua* canonries at the Colegiata would provide some of the same benefits as indigenous convent chaplains. Caja 178, exp. 26.

[29] The term *miserables* was used commonly at the time to refer to indigenous peoples. Echavarri also proposed that not only should native caciques be allowed to apply for prebendaries and canonries at the new Colegiata, but that they should even be preferred over Spaniards. Caja 178, exp. 26 and Watson Marrón, *El templo que unió a Nueva España*, 269-274. Echávarri also argued that native *caciques* (lords) should be allowed to apply for positions at the Colegiata, since many of them were excellent candidates.

would provide local indigenous worshippers with access to confession in their own tongues.

Echávarri's suggestion—that some of the Colegiata's chapter members should speak native tongues—would soon become a royal language policy. Recognizing that the conflicts over the collegiate church could jeopardize the institution's future, in 1751 King Ferdinand VI ordered the formation of a special *junta* (committee) of members from the Council of Castile and the Council of the Indies, in hopes of resolving the conflicts.[30] The junta addressed concerns over the Colegiata's special privileges and exemptions, as well as its impact on indigenous worship. The ministers who comprised the *junta* dismissed the natives' protests as merely a product of "the ignorance of the Indians, mixed with the fervor of their devotion." Nevertheless, they decided that they could stymie further disputes by requiring some of the collegiate church's ministers to pass a language exam. The junta thus proposed that the king should appoint *tenientes* (priests' assistants) to work at the Colegiata, who could speak Nahuatl, Otomi, Huastecan and Tarascan, so that they could preach, instruct, and provide confession to indigenous peoples who lived in the area or pilgrimaged there from afar.[31]

A variation on this suggestion would soon become law, as King Ferdinand VI agreed that introducing native tongues to the Colegiata would help settle the

[30] The five-person *junta* included three ministers from the Council of Castile (Diego Adorno, Juan Curiel and Francisco Zepeda) and two from the Council of the Indies (José Cornejo and Manuel Pablo Salcedo).
[31] The Junta members noted that this solution drew inspiration from the Sanctuaries of Santiago de Compostela in Galicia, and of Montserrat in Catalonia. Watson Marrón, *El templo que unió a Nueva España*, 287.

disagreements.[32] On June 20, 1751, he ordered that half of its prebendaries and *merced* and *gracia* canons (lower-tier canons) must be able to speak an indigenous language. The decree stated that these *lengua* priests had to explain Christian doctrine and provide confession to the natives who visited the shrine. Moreover, the king ordered, just as in competitions for standard benefices, the viceroy—rather than the king—should choose priests to fill these *lengua* positions, selecting from a shortlist that the archbishop had created. The archbishop and the Colegiata's *cabildo* (chapter of canons and prebendaries) would select candidates by examining them in Latin and theology, and also in an indigenous tongue. Significantly, the Crown specified that, if candidates' other qualifications were more or less equal, the viceroy, archbishop and *cabildo* should give preference to the priest with the highest level of language competency.[33] With this 1751 order, Spain's monarch integrated native tongues deeply into the infrastructure of the Virgin's collegiate church. By law, half of the Colegiata's prebendaries and lower-tier canons now had to be skilled in an indigenous tongue.

Contrary to the hopes of local indigenous worshippers, the 1751 language policy for the Colegiata increased royal and ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the Virgin's cult. This new policy appears to have successfully appeased detractors, at least to some extent: after more than two years of virulent controversy, the Colegiata de Guadalupe's abbot

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[32] Gustavo Watson Marrón suggests that Ferdinand VI's confessor, the Jesuit Father Francisco Rábago y Noriega, also played a key role in establishing the law requiring half of the Colegiata's chapter members to know a native tongue. Watson Marrón, *El templo que unió a Nueva España*, 331 and 396. Rábago also helped implement the Spanish Crown's secularization initiative in 1749. Brading, "Tridentine Catholicism," 6.

[33] AGI, México, 2549, fs. 44-45; México, 2558, fs. 183r-186v; México 2559, fs. 138-145; and México 2560, fs. 231-260.

and chapter members finally took office officially on October 22, 1751.[34] Ironically, by pandering to concerns over indigenous rights to the shrine, the new language law only helped to increase royal authority over native worship, at least in theory. Now, when indigenous worshippers visited the miraculous image at Tepeyac, they would receive spiritual guidance in their own tongues from some of the viceroyalty's highest ranking priests, rather than from lowly *curas* who were more independent from the archbishop and the Crown. However, not all agreed that this policy was the best way to increase royal authority over popular worship. Consequently, the squabbles over the collegiate church would continue on for the rest of the colonial period.

## ENFORCING THE COLEGIATA'S LANGUAGE POLICY: 1751-1757

Although it appeared to contradict imperial Hispanization policy, Ferdinand VI's language requirement for the Colegiata was no accident, nor was it merely a temporary measure intended to mollify the institution's opposition. The king and various royal and ecclesiastical officials must have considered the 1751 law to be important, for they devoted considerable effort to spurning the *cabildo*'s extensive complaints about the policy and ensuring that officials implemented it. As Watson Marrón suggests, the ministers who comprised the Colegiata's first *cabildo* probably disliked the law because

[34] Carrillo y Pérez, "La Real Colegiata," 184 and Poole, *Our Lady of Guadalupe*, 179. Even after the ministers took office, however, the monarch had difficulty implementing the new language policy. The following year, on May 4, 1752, Ferdinand VI issued a new decree, restating the rules he had stipulated the previous June concerning language requirements at the collegiate church. The king would not have bothered to reissue the same decree if anyone had followed it the first time. AGI, México, 2549, fs. 44-45 and México 2559, fs. 138-145.

they spoke no native tongues themselves, rendering some of them unqualified for promotions.[35] However, the controversy also stemmed from contradictions between deeply entrenched language ideologies and efforts to reform the Church. For the most part, debates over native tongues at the collegiate church between 1751 and 1757 centered on matters of priestly distinction and ecclesiastical authority.

The king's new language requirement for the collegiate church met resistance almost as soon as he released the decree, yet the monarch defended it staunchly. After the *cabildo* submitted a draft of the Colegiata's constitutions for approval, it added a complaint concerning the requirement to hire linguistically skilled ministers and asked to be exempted from the obligation. Both the Council of the Indies and Ferdinand VI rebuffed their request.[36] After the *cabildo*'s complaint, however, the king was not convinced that its chapter members would comply with the new policy. In September 1751, in hopes of enforcing compliance, the monarch sent a letter to José de Carvajal y Lancaster, a member of the Council of the Indies, asking him to ensure that the Council would follow instructions regarding collegiate church's language requirements. The letter continued: "it is my royal intention that these prebends remain fixed, and determined perpetually for priests with the aforementioned circumstances [those who were the most skilled at native tongues]…"[37] As early as 1751, then, Ferdinand VI made clear his unyielding support for *lengua* prebends and canons at the Virgin's church. He would tolerate no disobedience on the matter.

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[35] Watson Marrón, *El templo que unió a Nueva España*, 396.
[36] AGI, México 2560, fs. 231-260.
[37] AGI, México, 2549, f. 44.

Archbishop Rubio y Salinas and one of his advisers also helped to enforce the new law, especially in 1752 when yet another dispute arose over the collegiate church's constitutions. The Colegiata's abbot and *cabildo* members had drawn up a new draft of the constitutions, but they neglected to include statutes concerning the new royal language requirements, presumably in hopes of evading the law.[38] But the omission would not last long. When the *cabildo* sent its draft of the constitutions to the archbishop for approval in 1753, Rubio y Salinas had his *promotor fiscal* (chief legal adviser) examine the document. The promotor fiscal advised the archbishop to request a number of changes and additions to the Colegiata's statutes. Among these suggestions, he proposed that the *cabildo* add a new chapter to the regulations, the first title of which would reflect the king's 1751 decree by requiring half of the institution's prebendaries and *merced* and *gracia* canons to know a native tongue.[39]

The archbishop's *promotor fiscal* also forwarded three other ideas for the new chapter of the constitutions, all designed to increase the likelihood that collegiate church's ministers would obey the language requirements. First, he recommended that the process of examining and selecting candidates for the *lengua* chapter members should occur under the authority of the archbishop, without the involvement of the Colegiata's *cabildo*. Presumably, the promotor fiscal sought to ensure that the *cabildo*'s distaste for the policy did not interfere with the successful implementation of the law. His second recommendation was that the two most senior canons and prebendaries should provide

[38] AGN, Historia, Vol. 580-A, exp. 5 and AGI, México, 2558, fs. 55-108.
[39] *Ibid*.

confessions to indigenous peoples who spoke Nahuatl; the other canon should conduct Otomí confessions; and the remaining prebendary, in Mazahua.[40] By making this recommendation, the *promotor fiscal* must have hoped to create specific guidelines for the language law, and to bring those guidelines in line with what he considered the most probable needs of native worshippers.

The *cabildo*'s primary qualm with the language requirement was that it would degrade the integrity and educational standards of the Colegiata's chapter. Addressing this concern, the *promotor fiscal*'s third and final suggestion was that the collegiate church's *lengua* chapter members should only administer the sacrament of penance (confession), and that only the highest ranking canon (who was not a *lengua* minister) could conduct the other sacraments.[41] As discussed in Chapter One, churchmen generally linked native language competency with the clerical proletariat. Therefore, some saw language the law as an invitation to lowly, uneducated *curas* to rise in the ranks, and serve as undeserving ambassadors for an honorable institution. By suggesting that the chapter members hired for their language skills should only conduct confession, the *promotor fiscal* sought to ease fears that these priests would adversely affect the Colegiata's reputation. This way, native worshippers would be able to communicate with high-level ecclesiastics, but these less-learned *lengua* priests would have a limited impact upon theological matters at the institution. If only well-educated chapter members were

[40] *Ibid*. This suggestion contrasted with the royal *junta*'s earlier proposal for the ministers to speak Nahuatl, Otomi, Huastecan and Tarascan, and with the king's order, which had not specified which languages the priests must know.
[41] *Ibid*.

allowed to conduct most of the collegiate church's ceremonies, then the presence of lowly *lengua* clerics might not jeopardize the institution's high status.

Despite the *promotor fiscal*'s best efforts, the Colegiata's language policy continued to elicit resistance from both the *cabildo* and some royal officials. The archbishop supported his *promotor fiscal*'s recommendations, but there is no evidence that they ever became legally binding, nor did the *cabildo* ever update its constitutions to accommodate the language requirement.[42] Moreover, in 1754, a Colegiata prebendary named Joseph de Aregui wrote to the Council of the Indies, arguing that the collegiate church did not need *lengua* canonries and prebends. A *fiscal* (chief legal counsel) for the Audiencia agreed with Aregui's complaints, contending that, although the king was responsible for selecting most of the collegiate church's chapter members, the viceroy, instead, chose the *lengua* ones. Therefore, by requiring the Colegiata to employ *lengua* prebendaries and canons, Ferdinand VI was depriving himself of the royal prerogative of selecting all of its chapter members.[43]

The fiscal's other arguments revealed his true concern: that *lengua* priests were too uneducated and undistinguished to serve as chapter members at the Colegiata. He contended that the area's indigenous peoples spoke Spanish, and that those who travelled to Tepeyac did so for the purpose of visiting the Virgin's image, dancing, and conducting their own ceremonies—not to confess and congregate at the church. Therefore, chapter members who spoke native tongues were of little use to indigenous devotees who visited

[42] AGI, México, 2558, fs. 177r-188v.
[43] AGI, México, 2560, fs. 231-281 and Watson Marrón, *El templo que unió a Nueva España*, 325-6.

Tepeyac. To serve the few indigenous worshippers who did seek confession, it would be sufficient to employ two chaplains who spoke indigenous tongues. Aregui and the *fiscal* must have hoped to avoid saddling the chapter members with the burden of learning a language on the one hand, and on the other, having to hire humble *lengua* clerics to fill these positions. Delegating the task of native-language confession to lower ranked chaplains would ensure that *lengua* priests' limited prestige would not taint the Colegiata's reputation.[44]

This same concern about *lengua* clerics' lowliness arose again on May 20, 1757. At that time, the collegiate church's *cabildo* issued yet another complaint to the king about the institution's language requirements. The *cabildo* members warned that the priests who filled the *lengua* positions were insufficiently educated or distinguished to hold such a high ecclesiastical rank. They lamented that, after running two competitions for *lengua* ministers, the results were far from promising: only five priests had applied for the first position, and only two for the next. Even worse, not one of these applicants had a doctorate degree. This occurred in spite of the fact that well over one hundred had applied for parish positions in the archbishopric, and there was no shortage of priests with doctorates. Soon, the *cabildo* warned, the Colegiata's prebends would appeal only to impoverished priests of limited education and poor conduct, incapable of obtaining positions in parishes or at other churches. The chapter members feared that the institution

[44] *Ibid*.

would consequently come to be run by "idiot clergymen," which would be inappropriate for such a prestigious and honorable institution.[45]

Attempts to calm such fears by limiting *lengua* ministers to conducting confession had apparently been insufficient. According to the *cabildo*, the dishonor these priests brought to the Colegiata would not cease until they were banished entirely from the institution. The language requirements for the collegiate church's chapter members would nevertheless remain in place through the rest of the colonial period, thanks in large part to the efforts of Ferdinand VI, Archbishop Rubio y Salinas, and his promotor fiscal. But the belief of many ecclesiastics and royal officials that *lengua* ministers were inherently undereducated and lacking distinction would persist. Therefore, so too would the virulent debates over the Colegiata's language law.

## THE REIGN OF CHARLES III: 1759–1788

The Colegiata's royal language policy remained just as controversial after Charles III took the throne in 1759. During his reign, Bourbon efforts to reform the Church and religious life reached their apex, and thus shaping popular worship became more critical than ever in the eyes of royal and ecclesiastical reformers. This made the collegiate church's native-language requirements simultaneously more important and more controversial, because officials disagreed as to whether *lengua* chapter members helped or hindered these broader reform initiatives. Like his predecessor, however, Charles III

[45] Watson Marrón, *El templo que unió a Nueva España*, 326-7.

rejected all attempts to rescind the law. Instead, he responded to concerns about it by increasing his own jurisdiction over the process of selecting the collegiate church's *lengua* ministers.

As noted previously, in the 1760s reform-minded ecclesiastics began to promote a new brand of Catholicism called the new piety. While some reformers believed the Colegiata's native-language requirements could help spread the new piety, others thought the policy would only encourage unorthodox "Indian" forms of worship. The *Cámara de Indias* fell in the latter camp. During the 1760s, and especially the 1770s, the *Cámara* launched a campaign to reduce the role of native tongues at the Virgin's church and relegate to lower-level clergy the responsibility for knowing these tongues. Building on the *cabildo*'s arguments from the 1750s, the *Cámara* tried multiple times during Charles III's reign to rid the collegiate church of *lengua* chapter members.

The first attempt came in January 1762, when the *Cámara* argued that the Colegiata's language policy produced unrefined canons and prebendaries. Whereas the king had the power to decide who filled cathedral positions, the responsibility for selecting *lengua* chapter members fell mostly to the archbishop. In a *consulta* (written opinion) to Charles III, the *Cámara* contended that since the king was not involved in the selection process for the collegiate church's *lengua* ministers, the men who won these positions were not nearly as distinguished as the clergymen who occupied posts at New Spain's cathedrals. Moreover, "only those [priests] who from the beginning of their

studies are of a mind to apply to Indian Parishes commonly apply themselves to learning the languages of the natives; and these are the poorest, and of the lowest condition."[46]

Echoing complaints from the 1750s, the *Cámara* argued that the institution's language requirements were unnecessary. According to the *Cámara*'s ministers, the primary impetus behind the policy was the monarch's incorrect belief that enormous crowds of indigenous worshippers frequented the collegiate church, and that fulfilling their demand for confession required a large number of priests. Instead, the *Cámara* contended that visiting natives rarely asked to confess and that those who did seek confession could go to one of the many priests in Mexico City who spoke their languages. Consequently, simply employing a single priest (who was not a chapter member) would be more than sufficient to fulfill indigenous worshippers' needs. For the moment, the *Cámara* recommended extinguishing one of the *lengua* prebends, and redirecting the salary to such a priest.[47]

The *Cámara*'s arguments about the lowliness of the collegiate church's *lengua* ministers indicate that its members hoped to consign to lower-level ecclesiastics the responsibility of conducting confession in native tongues. Given the *Cámara*'s complaint that the king had no say as to which candidates were selected for *lengua* prebends and canonries, its members clearly hoped to centralize authority, giving more power to the king over the Colegiata's affairs, and less to the archbishop. In contrast, Ferdinand VI had hoped to centralize power by granting high-level ecclesiastics the responsibility for

[46] *Ibid*., 327-8.
[47] *Ibid*.

providing Guadalupe's cult with spiritual instruction in native tongues. The *Cámara* of the 1760s disagreed with this tactic, believing that Ferdinand VI's law granted too much power to priests who were relatively uneducated, and not enough to the monarch.

The *Cámara*'s complaints in the 1760s were only the beginning of its long campaign against the Colegiata's language policy. Although Charles III rejected the *Cámara*'s 1762 recommendations, his 1770 order banning clergymen from speaking indigenous tongues gave new vigor to the ministers' attempts to reduce the role of these tongues at the collegiate church.[48] In December 1771, as part of a broader report on the state of the collegiate church, the *Cámara* suggested that the King should eliminate *lengua* prebends and canonries altogether. The *Cámara* recommended that, instead of reserving half of its chapter positions for *lengua* priests, the Virgin's church should function in the same way as cathedrals, whose *cabildo*s simply appointed two *tenientes de cura* (lieutenant priests) who spoke native tongues.[49] Thus, the institution would still employ clerics who could provide confession to native-speaking indigenous worshippers, but the *lengua* positions would be much lower status, leaving the church's chapter positions open for more elite, educated priests. In the early 1760s the *Cámara* had hoped to reduce the dishonor that *lengua* chapter members supposedly bestowed upon the Colegiata by transferring some of their responsibilities to a lower-ranked priest. In contrast, by the 1770s they hoped to eliminate *lengua* chapter members altogether, and relegate native-language confessions to humble *tenientes*.

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[48] *Ibid*., 328.
[49] AGI, México, 2560, fs. 231-281.

Once again, Charles III rejected the *Cámara*'s attacks on the collegiate church's language requirements. A royal decree on June 10, 1773, ordered that the previous legislation—which stated that half of the institution's chapter members should be skilled in indigenous languages, and that the viceroy should select them—would remain in place.[50] It seemed that the issue was settled: seeing no contradiction between this policy and his 1770 Hispanization order, Charles III insisted that the Colegiata continue to hire canons and prebendaries who spoke native tongues.

Yet the *Cámara de Indias* persisted, still believing that *lengua* chapter members hindered efforts to reform the priesthood. Its ministers issued a new report in January 1774 contending that the local parish had never been a *lengua* one, and thus the collegiate church's priests ought not know any native tongues. They also cited a 1769 letter from Archbishop Lorenzana to the king, which had accused the Church of ignoring orders to teach Indians Spanish and the tenets of Catholicism. As discussed in Chapter Three, the archbishop suggested that in order to rectify the issue, the Church and Crown should start granting parish positions—even the *lengua* ones—to priests of high "merit," regardless of whether they spoke the appropriate native tongue. The *Cámara* noted that Charles III himself had followed up the Archbishop's report with his 1770 empire-wide ban on native tongues. They suggested that the king complement this legislation by abolishing language requirements for the Colegiata's clerics.[51]

[50] *Ibid*., f. 245v and fs. 229r-230v.
[51] *Ibid*., fs. 231-281.

Although the law for the collegiate church seemed to violate broader language reform measures, some argued that it was essential for the spiritual wellbeing of Mexico's indigenous peoples. When Charles III had his confessor, Friar Joaquín de Eleta, weigh in on the *Cámara*'s complaint, Eleta argued that maintaining *lengua* posts at the Colegiata did not run contrary to the 1770 ban on native tongues. In order to implement the 1770 orders effectively, the confessor reasoned that "time is required." New Spain's indigenous population could not learn Spanish overnight, and natives from all over the viceroyalty traveled to worship at the shrine at Tepeyac, or so he thought.[52] If these worshippers were to receive spiritual guidance at the collegiate church, it would need to be in their own tongues. According to the confessor, this guidance was crucial. Eleta's response indicates that he espoused the reformist, "new piety" vision of Catholicism that was becoming increasingly popular at the time. The confessor implied that indigenous worshippers at the Colegiata needed the guidance of linguistically skilled priests not only to provide them confession, but also to correct the supposedly unorthodox beliefs they might have acquired from a wide variety of conflicting catechisms. Eleta noted that the Fourth Provincial Mexican Council had ruled that New Spain's Catholics must use only the select few catechisms that the Council had approved.[53] The confessor's concern for standardizing catechisms indicates that he believed that the Church would need to provide all believers with clear, effective spiritual instruction if it was to unify the broad spectrum of Catholic beliefs throughout the viceroyalty.

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[52] *Ibid*., fs. 274v-281r.
[53] *Ibid*.

After voicing his support for the Colegiata's language policy, Eleta also made a second recommendation: the institution should select only the most reputable, accredited priests to serve as *lengua* prebendaries and canons.[54] In doing so, he hoped to ensure that highly qualified priests were responsible for spreading reformed Catholicism among indigenous worshippers. Apparently sharing in the belief that a high volume of indigenous worshippers flocked to the collegiate church, Eleta seems to have thought that it was an ideal place to provide the instruction required to bring his vision of reformed Catholicism into fruition.

The fact that the confessor was a Franciscan friar may also have contributed to his support for *lengua* positions. As Chapter Two demonstrated, the Franciscans and other mendicant orders frequently touted their linguistic abilities in order to prove their worth to the Church and Crown, and to combat secularization initiatives; however, this strategy became less valuable over time, as the language reforms progressed. Eleta might have thought that if the Colegiata continued to hire prebendaries and canons based in large part on their language competency, then knowing a native tongue would remain a valuable skill for clergymen. If so, royal authorities might allow the Franciscan order to persist in New Spain based on the utility of their linguistic skills. Regardless, Eleta's suggestions make plain his desire to assign high-level ecclesiastics—preferably highly qualified, well-educated ones—with the task of conducting confessions in native tongues.

In response to the *Cámara* and his confessor, Charles III found a way to grant himself as much authority as possible over popular worship at Tepeyac. On April 21,

[54] *Ibid*.

1774, he decreed that the Colegiata's *lengua* positions would remain in place, but with one alteration: the king, rather than the viceroy, would now have the final say as to which candidate filled each of these posts.[55] The king supported political centralization and ecclesiastical reform avidly. Therefore, maintaining a law intended to reassign authority over Guadalupe's cult from lowly priests and parishioners to highly ranked chapter members must have appealed to him. He may have believed that altering that law to give himself the power to select these men would ensure that only highly educated and distinguished candidates would fill these elite positions. Perhaps more importantly, this change gave the monarch significant authority over the Colegiata and the men charged with the spirituality of the masses. In some sense, it was as close as Charles III could come to directing the Guadalupan cult himself.

[55] Watson Marrón, *El templo que unió a Nueva España*, 330. It is possible, but not probable, that Eleta pressured the king into accepting his suggestion regarding the Colegiata's language policy. Echoing complaints from contemporary Jesuits, some scholars have argued that Eleta had significant power over the king, and was often responsible for the direction of royal policy during his reign. See for instance Keith Christiansen, ed. *Giambattista Tiepolo: 1696-1770* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1996); Michael Levey, "Tiepolo at the Court of Charles III," *The Burlington Magazine* 128 (1986): 423; Miguel Ángel Muñoz Romero, "Labores de espionaje del embajador Azpuru en Roma durante el primer año de exilio de los jesuitas españoles (1767)," in *Aspectos de la política religiosa en el siglo XVIII: Estudios en homenaje a Isidoro Pinedo Iparraguirre S.J.*, ed. Enrique Giménez López (San Vicente Raspeig: Publicaciones de la Universidad de Alicante, 2010), 100; and Enrique Giménez López, "Los jesuitas y la teoría de la conspiración," in *Ibid*., 256. However, other historians disagree, contending that, although Charles III took the advice of his advisers seriously, he ultimately made his own decisions. See for instance Catherine Whistler, "G. B. Tiepolo at the Court of Charles III," *The Burlington Magazine* 128 (1986): 199-203 and Leandro Martínez Peñas, *El confesor del rey en el antiguo regimen* (Madrid: Editorial Complutense, 2007), 647-667. Given that little is known about confessors and their influence upon royal policy, and given that the Colegiata's language law supported Charles III's project to reform the Church and the Empire, it does not seem likely that the confessor pressured the monarch into accepting his recommendations on the matter.

## LANGUAGE POLICY IN PRACTICE

Throughout the late colonial period, royal and ecclesiastical officials debated vociferously not only the language laws for Guadalupe's church but also the manner in which they should put these rules into practice. According to royal policy, *lengua* chapter members were supposed to be well-educated, experienced, of good conduct, and skilled in a native tongue. In practice, it was difficult to find all of these qualities in a single candidate. As a result, archbishops, fiscales and the *cabildo* often argued over how much weight to grant linguistic competency, and the candidates with the most impressive language skills were rarely chosen for the Colegiata's chapter positions. Most of the ministers who served as *lengua* prebendaries and canons spoke Nahuatl. This was due in part to the demographics of the indigenous devotees who worshipped there, but especially to concerns that clergymen who spoke Otomi or Mazahua might be less distinguished and less educated.

Officials' frequent quarrels over which tongues *lengua* ministers should speak and how well they should speak them reflect their concerns over who should lead Guadalupe's cult, and how. What sort of priest would be able to teach indigenous peoples how to worship Guadalupe in an orthodox manner? Should he speak their language brilliantly, or was it more important that he be deeply familiar with the theological implications of his work? The royal and ecclesiastical officials who helped select the collegiate church's chapter members debated these questions, but rarely agreed on an answer.

In spite of the frequent disagreements over the Crown's stipulations for the Colegiata, the officials in charge of filling the institution's *lengua* positions obeyed the law, for the most part. Although the available data is piecemeal—records documenting competitions for *lengua* prebends and canons are mostly only available from 1770 onward—it suggests that *lengua* chapter members generally did know the languages that the law required. Information is available on 32 men who successfully became *lengua* chapter members.[56] Of these, at least 21 passed the appropriate exams in Nahuatl, Otomi or Mazahua. Two others most likely had the necessary language skills, but the evidence is not incontrovertible. The documentation provides insufficient data regarding the language competency of the other nine successful applicants.[57] In accordance with Charles III's policy for the Colegiata, the *cabildo*, archbishop and viceroy generally filled *lengua* canonries and prebends with candidates who spoke native tongues throughout the late 18th century.

Many of the the collegiate church's *lengua* priests might not have known their chosen tongues especially well, however. In 1805, examiner Joseph Díaz tested candidates' Nahuatl skills for a vacant prebend. Only two clergymen applied for the position—Tomás de Arrieta and Joseph Ignacio Heredía—and Díaz decided that neither candidate was sufficiently competent with Nahuatl to fill the vacancy. He granted them four months to learn the language and then examined them again. This time, Díaz

[56] Documents are available for only six competitions before 1770, all of which took place during the 1750s.
[57] AGI, México, 2559, 2560, 2561 and 2563; AGN, BN 575, exp. 29, BN 607, exp. 137, BN 338, exp. 12, BN 729, exp. 1, BN 1047, exp. 2, BN 1095, exp. 9, and BN 1111, exp. 8; AGN, CRS, Vol. 3, exps. 3-5, Vol. 9, exp. 1 and Vol. 53, exp. 7; AGN, Historia, Vol. 80, exp. 4; AGN, RCO Vol. 165-A, exp. 65; AHAM, FE, Caja 195, exp. 18; and Watson Marrón, *El templo que unió a Nueva España*, 419-429.

declared both candidates' language skills "sufficient," and Arrieta attained the position.[58] Having been given only four months to improve his linguistic abilities, Arrieta's Nahuatl was likely far from perfect when he became a prebendary; the examiner rated his language skills not "excellent," but only "sufficient." Ferdinand VI's law stipulated that the Colegiata's *lengua* priests had to pass an exam in Nahuatl, Otomi or Mazahua; if all other qualifications were equal, the candidate with the best language skills should win the position. In many cases, other qualifications were not equal, and thus candidates' grades on their language exams were sometimes of little import, so long as they passed.

One competition for a Nahuatl prebend in 1808 indicates that other factors, such as personal connections, were sometimes more important than candidates' linguistic abilities. All eight applicants for the prebend took two exams: one on theology, and one on Nahuatl. One candidate, José Alejandro García Jove, did very well on his theology exam, but received the lowest Nahuatl grade—"*segunda baja*," or "low second"—out of the seven candidates for the position. Another, Cristóbal Gómez Peralta, received a very high Nahuatl grade—"*primera*" (first)—in Nahuatl, and did reasonably well in theology ("*segunda con primera*," or a high "second"). A third applicant, Manuel de Burgos y Acuña, did better than all the other candidates on his exams, receiving top marks in both Nahuatl and theology. The fact that Burgos was highly skilled in both of the applicable fields suggests that he should have prevailed: he and García Jove both excelled at theology, so, by law, Burgos's superior Nahuatl skills should have won him the position.

[58] AGI, México 2559, fs. 445-448.

Yet, Archbishop Francisco Javier de Lizana y Beaumont selected García Jove as his first choice for the position, apparently overlooking his poor Nahuatl grade.[59]

The archbishop's curious selection did not go unnoticed. Upon examining Lizana y Beaumont's list of preferred candidates for the prebend, a *fiscal* noted that Jove had the most impressive education, having graduated from the University of Mexico. However, wrote the *fiscal*, the nature of this prebend required that "instruction in language should be the greater merit." He pointed out that the archbishop's second choice, Gómez Peralta, might be a better candidate for this particular job: he had 25 years of experience as a priest, mostly in difficult parishes, during which time he had perfected his knowledge of Nahuatl. As a parish priest, Gómez had apparently eliminated "the idolatries, rites and superstitions of the Indians"—an accomplishment that was "just as recommended by the same law as that of having a Bachelor and Doctorate degree…" The *fiscal* also noted that it was odd that Burgos had not even made the top three, given that his exam grades had been better than anyone else's.[60] In the *fiscal*'s opinion, by prioritizing García Jove's impressive education over other candidates' linguistic prowess, Archbishop Lizana y Beaumont had broken the law.

In reality, the archbishop's reasoning likely had more to do with patronage than language skills, or even education. What both the archbishop and the *fiscal* neglected to mention was that García Jove was extremely well connected. He devoted an entire section of his resume to "Public Opinion and Recommendations," noting that he had the

[59] AGI, México 2563, fs. 603-673 and AGN, CRS, Vol. 3, exp. 3.
[60] *Ibid*.

support of previous viceroys Branciforte and Azanza, ex-archbishop Haro y Peralta, and the current archbishop, Lizana y Beaumont. According to García Jove's resume, all these officials had informed the king of his high level of education and good conduct, which meant that they all knew him and liked him, or at least had some personal connection to him.[61] Gómez Peralta paled in comparison: he lacked not only a doctorate, but also any links to royal and ecclesiastical authorities.

Manuel de Burgos, meanwhile, might have been too unpopular to receive the position. Burgos had the support of the previous archbishop, Haro y Peralta, and was just as well-educated as García Jove.[62] A 1793 report by a *subdelegado* (district governor) stated that he was "talented, well educated, and one of the best theologians in the archdiocese." However, that same report noted that Burgos's "conduct has caused the greatest harm to many residents of this mining settlement [Taxco]"; apparently, he had been "fomenting disputes and discord among the residents," and had conducted business with the mines instead of focusing on his pastoral duties.[63] Whether Burgos's reputation for discord and poor conduct was widely known amongst royal and ecclesiastical higher-ups is unknown, but it could not have helped him in his quest to work at the Colegiata. Moreover, García Jove's connections were difficult to beat: he had the full support of not only multiple viceroys, but also of the current archbishop. The available documentation

[61] AGI, México 2561.
[62] Manuel de Burgos's *resúmen de méritos* is not included in the documentation for the 1808 prebend, but an earlier resume of his, from around 1801, is available in AGN, CRS Vol. 53, exp. 7.
[63] Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred*, 185.

does not reveal what happened next, except that, despite the *fiscal*'s objection and his mediocre Nahuatl skills, García Jove eventually got the prebend.[64]

The complex process of promoting prebendaries also impeded the collegiate church from hiring skilled linguists. Yet again, in 1811, Burgos's impressive linguistic qualifications failed to earn him a chapter position. That year, Tomás de Arrieta obtained a Nahuatl canonry over Burgos, even though Burgos's resume and exam grades indicate that he knew the language much better. Arrieta likely received the job because he was already a prebendary at the Colegiata, whereas Burgos had no prior affiliation with the institution.[65] Canons earned substantially larger salaries than prebendaries: the former made a salary of 1500 pesos per year, while the latter only received 900 pesos.[66] Consequently, the goal of any prebendary was to become a canon, and thus the *cabildo* and archbishop generally preferred to grant canonries to current prebendaries over outside applicants. If the Virgin's church was going to attract the archbishopric's most talented and reputable ministers, it would need sometimes to prioritize the careers of its chapter members over candidates' linguistic abilities.

Nevertheless, applicants' language qualifications sometimes did serve as the deciding factor, as one 1789 dispute demonstrates. When Archbishop Nuñez de Haro y Peralta selected Francisco Julián Benedicto as his first choice for a vacant Nahuatl canonry, the prelate's second choice, Manuel de Silva y Jurado, complained to the

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[64] AGI, México 2563, fs. 603-673.

[65] AGI, México 2560, f. 1107r-v; AGI, México 2561; and AGN, CRS, Vol. 3, exp. 5. Burgos did eventually win a prebend in 1813, but this may have been because there were only three candidates for the position. AGI, México 2560, f. 1112; AGI, México 2559, f. 260 and fs. 270-305; and AGN, BN 729, exp. 1.

[66] AGI, México, 2560, fs. 605-606 and 790.

viceroy, arguing that he was more qualified because he was more proficient with Nahuatl. The case went on to a fiscal, who accused the archbishop of choosing Benedicto for his family ties, rather than weighing candidates' qualifications. Silva held no doctorate; however, the *fiscal* argued, his thirty years of service, mostly in indigenous parishes, made up for his relatively unimpressive education. Furthermore, the fiscal asserted that, when filling a *lengua* post, language skills should trump education, which meant that Silva was the most worthy of the vacant canonry. In light of the *fiscal*'s arguments, the Council of the Indies supported appointing Silva to the position, and in 1790 King Ferdinand VII granted him his wish.[67] Silva's proficiency in Nahuatl had won him the canonry.

Also up for debate—at least until the mid-1770s—was the matter of exactly which native tongues the Colegiata's ministers should know. Until that time, the law did not specify. During the first two decades of the collegiate church's existence, the *cabildo* often designated its *lengua* positions simply as "*lengua*," without stating exactly which language the new minister should speak. Despite the vague designations, however, in practice the *cabildo* granted the vast majority of its native-language positions to Nahuatl speakers, apparently based on the reasoning that most of the indigenous peoples who worshipped at the sanctuary spoke that tongue.[68]Another motive for granting most positions to Nahuatl speakers was to aid the careers of the Colegiata's prebendaries by ensuring them the possibility of promotion. This became clear in 1775, when Archbishop

[67] AGI, México 2559, fs. 201-203; AGI, México, 2560, fs. 663-680; and AGN, BN 575, exp. 29.
[68] AGN, Historia, Vol. 80, exp. 4; AGI, México, 2559, fs. 138-145; and AGI, México, 2560, fs. 330-333.

Nuñez de Haro y Peralta decided suddenly to affix specific languages to the institution's posts: he determined that the six *lengua* positions should be divided equally among speakers of Nahuatl, Otomi and Mazahua, with one canon and one prebendary assigned to each of these tongues. Later that year, Ignacio Hugo de Omerik, a Nahuatl-speaking prebendary, tried to apply for a vacant canonry. The new ruling, combined with a 1751 law banning Colegiata's *lengua* prebendaries from ascending to non-*lengua* canonries, meant that Omerik could not apply, since the vacant position was now reserved for Otomi speakers.[69] Instead, he would need to wait for a Nahuatl-speaking canon to die. Prior to the archbishop's policy change, the *cabildo* had purposely neglected to assign specific languages to *lengua* posts, in part to prevent situations like Omerik's.

Omerik's experience worried the other members of the *cabildo,* and together they wrote to Archbishop Nuñez de Haro y Peralta in October 1775, asking him to rescind the order requiring an equal number of ministers for each language. Predictably, the *cabildo*'s first argument was that the new policy would fail to meet the needs of the indigenous worshippers who visited the sanctuary. According to the chapter members, the vast majority of the worshippers who sought confession at the Colegiata spoke Nahuatl; more of them spoke Nahuatl, it said, than speakers of all the other native tongues combined. Consequently, the *cabildo* argued, if the institution's *lengua* positions were spread equally among speakers of three languages, the Nahuatl-speaking priests

[69] AGI, México, 2559, fs. 138-145; AGI, México, 2560, fs. 330-333; AGN, BN 562, exp. 7; and AGN, RCO, Vol. 109, exp. 99.

would be overwhelmed by demand for confessions, while the Otomi and Mazahua experts would have nothing to do.[70]

The chapter members' second argument was somewhat different: it reveals that the collegiate church employed mostly Nahuatl-speaking ministers in part for the purpose of maintaining the *cabildo*'s honor and integrity. In their letter to the archbishop, the chapter members stated that,

> one of the urgent motives for taking the important measure of extinguishing the use of so many tongues in the parishes is that, because their [the parishes'] owners are commonly not careermen ["*de carrera*"], the Lord Archbishops are forced to entrust the care of their flock to subjects in whom the desired qualities for carrying out their ministry are not found…[71]

The *cabildo* warned that increasing the number of Otomi- and Mazahua-speaking chapter members could replicate this situation at the Colegiata: "The same would come to pass in the provision of these prebends… for, those [priests] who speak Otomi are few, and far fewer Mazahua." This was because "the *pueblos* in which these two languages are spoken are few and worthless, and those where Nahuatl is spoken are splendid and numerous."[72] In other words, few clerics bothered to learn Otomi or Mazahua, since learning these tongues afforded minimal job prospects, all in undesirable parishes. If Guadalupe's church were to abide by the prelate's request to fill two positions with priests who spoke Otomi, and another two with Mazahua speakers, the pool of candidates would be small, and thus the *cabildo* would likely need to grant the positions to clerics without doctorates,

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[70] AGN, BN 562, exp. 7.
[71] *Ibid*.
[72] *Ibid*.

and of minimal distinction. The old notion that *lengua* ministers were too uneducated and undistinguished to serve as highly ranked ecclesiastics had persisted. But, now that the *cabildo* was filled with Nahuatl speakers, its members applied this logic only to priests who spoke Otomi or Mazahua.

Archbishop Nuñez de Haro y Peralta appears to have shared the *cabildo*'s concern for both prebendaries' careers and the Colegiata's integrity. He passed the letter on to the Viceroy, noting his support for the *cabildo*'s request and suggesting that, rather than maintaining two ministers who spoke each tongue, the church should have four who spoke Nahuatl, one who knew Otomi, and one Mazahua. The prelate also recommended that it should not matter how many of each rank spoke each tongue, so long as, in total, four prebendaries or canons spoke Nahuatl, one Otomi, and one Mazahua (thus, for example, the Otomi speaker could be a prebendary or a canon, and any combination of prebendaries and canons could comprise the four Nahuatl speakers). This way, wrote the archbishop, a prebendary who knew one language could be promoted to a canonry assigned to a different tongue, so long as the new prebendary who took his place spoke the same language as the deceased canon.[73] The prelate's new suggestion would allow prebendaries like Omerik to apply for any *lengua* canonry they desired, significantly increasing their opportunities for promotion. It would also ensure that visiting natives could confess in any of the three tongues, while still allowing Nahuatl-speaking priests to dominate the Colegiata's chapter. Employing only one Otomi speaker and one Mazahua

[73] AGI, México, 2559, fs. 138-145; AGI, México, 2560, fs. 330-333; AGN, BN 562, exp. 7; and AGN, RCO, Vol. 109, exp. 99.

speaker would reduce the chances of having to select a candidate who was unqualified, either in terms of language skills or education.

Nuñez de Haro y Peralta's suggestion received praise and approval from other authorities, who must have agreed that priests who spoke Nahuatl were superior to those who knew Otomi or Mazahua. The king and Council of the Indies supported the measure, as did the *Real Acuerdo* (the name for the *Audiencia* when it acted as an advisory council to the viceroy). The Council of the Indies approved the archbishop's request, calling it "useful to the spiritual benefit of the public." Having received extensive support for the measure, Charles III issued a royal decree on July 18, 1778, stating that four of the Colegiata's *lengua* chapter members should speak Nahuatl, one Otomi, and one Mazahua. As the archbishop had recommended, the 1778 order also stipulated that *lengua* prebendaries could apply for any *lengua* canonry, regardless of the specific language of the position, so long as the institution maintained the proper number of ministers who spoke each of the three tongues.[74] Royal law thus endorsed the dominance of Nahuatl speakers among the Colegiata's *lengua* ministers, to prevent lowly Otomi and Mazahua clerics from sullying the institution's honor.

The debates over which language each *lengua* chapter member should know—and how well he should speak it—had significant implications not only for the indigenous peoples who sought confession at the Colegiata, but also for the direction the Catholic Church would take during the Bourbon reform era. In the eyes of most royal and

[74] AGI, México, 2559, fs. 138-145; AGI, México, 2560, fs. 330-333; AGN, BN 562, exp. 7; and AGN, RCO, Vol. 109, exp. 99.

ecclesiastical officials, a parish priest with a bachelor degree who spoke Otomi and had extensive experience in difficult parishes was very different from a renowned scholar with a doctorate who spoke Nahuatl and had only worked in a select few of the best parishes. A high-level ecclesiastic in charge of directing Guadalupe's cult would need the experience and communication skills of the former, but the distinction and theological training of the latter. Yet, many officials saw "distinguished, educated, and highly skilled with Otomi" as an oxymoron—an impossible standard given that native-language competency signified limited wealth and learning. The result was extensive debate over the qualifications of the collegiate church's *lengua* ministers—and a chapter filled with priests who spoke Nahuatl, but were not brilliant linguists.

## CONCLUSION

The law requiring the Collegiate Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe to maintain chapter members who spoke native tongues was not primarily a concession to indigenous spiritual needs, nor was it a pledge of support for native culture and religion. Instead, the royal and ecclesiastical authorities who forged, supported and implemented the institution's language policy hoped to use native tongues as a tool for standardizing devotion to the Virgin and reducing the authority of friars and parish priests over local religion. However, royal ministers, prelates and the Colegiata's *cabildo* members did not all agree on what role native tongues should play in this new model of religious authority. That Our Lady of Guadalupe's collegiate church would provide confession in native

tongues to visiting native devotees was more or less a foregone conclusion. This was the case almost from the moment of the institution's founding in 1749. What *was* controversial was the notion that highly ranked chapter members, rather than lowly *tenientes*, should be well-acquainted with these languages.

The impact of the collegiate church and its language requirements upon popular worship are unknown. The institution probably did successfully wrest some control over Guadalupan ritual from the indigenous peoples of nearby Tlalnepantla; removing the Virgin's image from their possession must have had some effect upon their religious practices. However, the institution may not have been as effective a tool for controlling widespread native devotion as many authorities had hoped. Although devotion to the Virgin of Guadalupe expanded considerably during the 18th century—in part due to the promotional efforts of royal and ecclesiastical authorities—Tepeyac never became an especially popular destination for pilgrimages from afar. According to William Taylor, relatively few residents of areas beyond Tepeyac's vicinity travelled to visit the Virgin's image at the shrine.[75] Moreover, as previously mentioned, some testimonies from the period suggest that many visitors to the shrine focused on their own celebrations, and did not request confession or spiritual guidance from the Colegiata's chapter members. Despite the Virgin's rising popularity, the collegiate church may not have been the

[75] This was in part because such journeys were unaffordable for most; in part because royal and ecclesiastical officials discouraged pilgrimages due to their tendency to produce social disorder, vagrancy and economic dislocation; and in part because, in early modern Catholic culture, copies of miraculous images were just as powerful as the originals. Thus, for most Guadalupan devotees who did not live near the shrine at Tepeyac, it would have made more sense to visit a copy of the image that was closer to home. Taylor, *Shrines & Miraculous Images*, 130-136.

magnet for popular devotion that royal and ecclesiastical authorities had hoped it would be.

Regardless of whether the Colegiata's language law attained its ultimate purpose, the development of this legislation reveals much about New Spain's language regime during the late colonial period. Priests' language competency presented an uncomfortable paradox. Those who knew native tongues held a certain power, but tended to lack the other qualities reformers looked for in a cleric: education, distinction, wealth and good customs. Seen through these authorities' eyes, indigenous tongues were not emblems of "Indianness" and unsuccessful colonization so much as strategic resources possessed by everyone but themselves. Reformers hoped to rectify the situation in part by reassigning the task of translation to well-educated clergymen with close connections to the archbishop and monarch. The Colegiata, then, was an experiment in altering the links between language and religious authority.

## Conclusion: What's so Colonial about Linguistic Inequality?

Central New Spain's language regime changed considerably over the course of the late colonial period. Based on new, Enlightenment-inspired ideas about governance, Bourbon reformers like Archbishop Rubio y Salinas pushed for clerical reform and Hispanization in the 1750s. These two initiatives went hand-in-hand: both were intended to produce a learned, obedient clergy subjected to the authority of the Crown, and—in turn—a better-educated, more obedient, and more orthodox indigenous population. If indigenous peoples spoke Spanish, they would understand the faith better, feel a stronger connection to the Spanish Crown, and would be more inclined to learning. Perhaps most importantly, they would no longer need the kinds of priests who were most likely to know native languages: the seemingly powerful and disobedient friars of the mendicant orders, and the poor and undereducated "clerical proletariat." By the late 1760s, a handful of reformers—most notably Archbishop Lorenzana—were promoting sudden, radical Hispanization in hopes of simultaneously "fixing" both the clergy and indigenous peoples. Their efforts culminated in a 1770 royal decree from Charles III, which ordered the extirpation of native tongues and demanded that prelates cease assigning benefices based on clerics' language skills.

These policy changes had two significant results for New Spain's language regime. First, reformers' plan to revamp the clergy and the indigenous population significantly altered language ideologies within the Church. Friars of the mendicant orders discovered this early on: by the mid-1750s, they could no longer count on their

linguistic expertise to garner favor with royal and ecclesiastical officials. Although friars had frequently used their language competency as a defense mechanism against the new secularization reforms in the late 1740s and early 1750s, the mendicants quickly realized that their linguistic prowess was no longer a positive attribute in the eyes of reformers. Friars responded by attempting to alter the mendicant language ideology in their favor, either by severing ties with native tongues or by defending native languages and the regular orders in tandem. The mendicants failed to halt either Hispanization or secularization, however.

The second effect of Bourbon policy changes upon the language regime was that language competency became less significant to secular parish assignments. After Charles III's 1770 decree, prelates, viceroys and examining committees became less likely to assign benefices to parish priests who knew the local language. Thus, by the late 18th century, the same language ideologies that had long linked native tongues with friars and the clerical proletariat were no longer quite so advantageous for these segments of the priesthood. The reform era had turned these language ideologies against the very clerics who had helped produce them.

The language regime retained far more of its character than previous studies would suggest, however. Native tongues remained deeply integrated into the Catholic Church's bureaucracy, career paths, political struggles and religious services. Language competency among the secular clergy continued to index socioeconomic status: while members of the undereducated "clerical proletariat" often had to learn a native tongue, the more privileged priests generally did not. Moreover, reformers' assumption that

reducing the role of native tongues in ecclesiastical administration would lead to a more educated clergy turned out to be incorrect; fewer parish priests knew the local language after the reforms, but members of the clerical proletariat nevertheless continued to attain benefices.

Proclamations from the likes of Rubio y Salinas and Lorenzana in favor of Hispanization had only a limited influence upon the actual bureaucratic processes of the Mexican Church. Lorenzana's radical vision for language reform was shared only by a small handful of reformers, and only in the late 1760s and early 1770s. Royal and ecclesiastical officials never arrived at a consensus on language policy, because it was not immediately clear what policy would help them achieve their other reformist aims. As a result, royal and ecclesiastical authorities continued to assign some benefices to priests who spoke the local language well after 1770—especially in the more remote parts of the archbishopric. Additionally, from the 1750s onward, royal and ecclesiastical officials—including Rubio y Salinas and Charles III—worked hard to ensure that high-ranking ecclesiastics at the Collegiate Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe could speak a native tongue. Although New Spain's language policies and ideologies underwent considerable changes during the Bourbon dynasty, the viceroyalty did not experience a complete language regime "redesign." Contrary to previous scholarship, by the end of the colonial period there was no coherent language policy at all, and native languages were still integral to the operation, bureaucracies, and hierarchies of the Catholic Church.

## DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This dissertation has left some unanswered questions about New Spain's language regime under Bourbon rule. For instance, by focusing solely on the language regime and language ideologies within the Catholic Church, I have necessarily neglected the question of how the language regime might have differed beyond the boundaries of this institution. Legislation and writings by Lorenzana and other reformers illustrate beyond a doubt that these Church-related ideologies had a decisive impact upon language policies during this period. Yet the fact that language ideologies were so deeply integrated into the social and cultural fabric of the Church raises numerous questions about the language regime in other spheres of colonial life, among groups other than priests. For example, what kinds of language ideologies were associated with other linguistic intermediaries, such as interpreters or notaries? What was the language regime like within, say, local markets, where many must have used native languages on a regular basis? How might patterns of language use have affected local social hierarchies, or perceptions of language's relation to race or ethnicity? It is possible that these other elements of the language regime, beyond the scope of the Church, were just as critical in shaping language policy during this period.

Similarly, the Hispanization policies of the 18th century must have affected life outside the Church. As I mentioned in the Introduction, a few historians have analyzed the reforms' influence on indigenous education. While officials successfully founded many Spanish-language schools, indigenous peoples did not always cooperate with this

education initiative, and sometimes refused to send their children to class.[1] Moreover, Yanna Yannakakis has analyzed the Hispanization policies' effects upon local elections in Villa Alta, Oaxaca. Charles III's 1770 law ordered that only indigenous peoples who knew Spanish were eligible to serve as elected officials. Yannakakis finds that Villa Alta's elections did not comply with this requirement, and she posits that few, if any towns in the area would have had enough Spanish-speaking native residents to be able to do so. Yet when Villa Alta experienced an electoral dispute in 1789, the Audiencia's legal advisor invoked the 1770 law; he told the *alcalde mayor* that he could resolve the issue by granting the positions to whichever candidates spoke Spanish. Thus, although Villa Alta did not adhere closely to the Hispanization policy, the law nevertheless had a decisive impact on the resolution of this electoral dispute.[2] Further research might show that language policy altered life in indigenous communities in other ways, as well.

I have also focused almost exclusively on men, and I have not analyzed gender as a component of language ideology. Yet ideas about gender must have wielded significant influence upon the language regime, especially given that race/ethnicity and "Indianness" were heavily gendered. Matthew O'Hara has shown that 18th-century royal and ecclesiastical authorities enthusiastically approved the foundation of multiple convents in New Spain that were exclusively for native women, but only a single convent for indigenous men. O'Hara posits that this occurred because these authorities tended to see the category of "Indian" as inherently feminine; authorities thought this made native

[1] Tanck de Estrada, *Pueblos de Indios*; María Bono López, "La política lingüística" and "Las reformas borbónicas"; and Zahino Peñafort, *Iglesia y sociedad*.
[2] Yannakakis, *The Art of Being In-Between*, 171-178.

women ideally suited to convent life, but native men spiritually and politically unfit to serve as priests.[3] Laura A. Lewis contends that this feminized understanding of natives framed indigenous peoples as naturally weak, and yet also "bearers of a kind of feminized sexual and supernatural immorality."[4] Colonial Spanish Americans understood other *casta* categories (aside from "Indian") to be gendered, as well.[5]

There is good reason to believe that New Spain's language ideologies and language regime would also have reflected ideas about gender. Sociolinguists and linguistic anthropologists have demonstrated that language ideologies often link certain languages or patterns of language use with masculinity or femininity.[6] The ideologies I discussed in Chapters One and Two must have had a gendered dimension. The documents I used provide only the tiniest glimpses into this. Most notably, during discussions over secularization, Archbishop Rubio y Salinas suggested that indigenous women might be critical to Hispanization efforts due to their natural inclination toward using Spanish. He asserted that, in theory, it should have been more difficult to introduce the Spanish language to *indias* (native women), because they were "inexperienced" and,

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[3] O'Hara, *A Flock Divided*, 59.

[4] Laura A. Lewis, "The 'Weakness' of Women and the Feminization of the Indian in Colonial Mexico" *Colonial Latin American Review* 5:1 (1996): 73.

[5] See for instance Twinam, *Purchasing Whiteness* and María Elena Martínez, "The Black Blood of New Spain: Limpieza de Sangre, Racial Violence, and Gendered Power in Early Colonial Mexico" *The William and Mary Quarterly* 61:3 (2004): 479-520

[6] See for instance Janet Holmes and Miriam Meyerhoff, *The Handbook of Language and Gender* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003); Don Kulick, "Anger, Gender, Language Shift, and the Politics of Revelation in a Papua Nwe Guinea Village" in *Language Ideologies*, eds. Schieffelin, Woolard and Kroskrity; Charles L. Briggs, ""You're a Liar—You're Just Like a Woman!": Constructing Dominant Ideologies of Language in Warao Men's Gossip" in same volume; and Judith T. Irvine, "The Family Romance of Colonial Linguistics: Gender and Family in Nineteenth-Century Representations of African Languages," in *Languages and Publics: The Making of Authority*, eds. Susan Gal and Kathryn Woolard (New York: Routledge, 2001).

"because of their sex, little accustomed to dealing with Spaniards…" Despite these hindrances, however, women still "comply with less aversion than men to leaving behind their native tongue…" Moreover, in parishes where priests only spoke Spanish, the *indias* generally insisted on confessing in Spanish.[7] Rubio y Salinas's comments indicate that language ideologies might have linked Spanish more closely to native women than to native men. This raises the question of what kinds of language ideologies existed regarding nuns. Perhaps native women's special relationship with the Spanish language influenced authorities' willingness to open convents for *indias*.

The study of language policy in New Spain would also benefit from attention to areas outside the Archbishopric of Mexico. The language regime might have differed dramatically between central New Spain and the viceroyalty's frontier zones. I had initially planned on conducting this sort of comparison by devoting a chapter to language policy in the missions of northern New Spain, including Sonora, California, Durango, Texas and the Sierra Gorda. Available documents for this kind of examination include reports from friars to monarchs and viceroys regarding the state of their missions, and decrees stating royal expectations for evangelization in these regions. My limited foray into these records indicated that royal authorities did not consider Hispanization a priority in these northern frontier zones. Missionaries' orders were to spread the faith and "pacify" indigenous peoples; in general, royal officials did not seem to care what language natives spoke, so long as they obeyed royal authority and submitted to a

[7] Caja 104CL, Libro 3.

sedentary and Catholic lifestyle.[8] This may have occurred because the Crown had only a tenuous hold on these frontier regions, where intrusions from other colonial powers posed a constant threat. Even the most adamant reformers might have considered it unwise to pursue Hispanization under these circumstances.[9] Indeed, as I demonstrated in Chapter Four, even in the centrally-located Archbishopric of Mexico the curas of relatively remote parishes tended to know the local languages. It would thus come as no surprise if officials abandoned Hispanization altogether in the even more remote regions on the northern frontier. These are preliminary findings, however. Further research might reveal that language policy in the northern frontier zones was much more complex, and perhaps highly consequential for New Spain's language regime more broadly.

## LANGUAGE POLICY IN THE NATIONAL PERIOD

I hope this study will assist modern-day efforts to revitalize Mexico's indigenous languages by providing insight into the origins of linguistic prejudice. As I discuss below, today indigenous languages and their speakers suffer from extensive persecution. Many

[8] See for instance BNAH, FF Vol. 66, f. 41 (a 1772 letter from Viceroy Antonio Bucareli to the San Fernando Franciscans regarding the pacification and evangelization of indigenous peoples in the northern missions); BNAH, FJ Caja 20, Doc 36 (a 1793 series of reports on the northern Jesuit missions compiled by Viceroy Revillagigedo the Younger, who states his opinion that the friars in this area should know the local native tongues); and BNAH, FF Vol. 122, fs. 38v-48v (a report from Franciscan friars on the state of their missions, noting their priorities—none of which was Hispanization). The collections BNAH FF, BNAH FJ and AGN, Historia include more mission reports and viceregal orders of this ilk from the late 18th century.

[9] These findings are preliminary, and may not apply in other parts of the Spanish Empire that might be considered "frontier zones." For instance, Kim Morse has found that Hispanization policies were highly effective in 18th-century Venezuela, where royal authorities seem to have pursued language reform with more force than in New Spain. Kim Morse, ""Words Sweet as Milk": Franciscans, Indians, and the Politics of Transition in Bourbon Venezuela" (paper presented at the annual meeting for the Rocky Mountain Council on Latin American Studies, March 31, 2012).

scholars see this intolerance of native tongues as a vestige of the colonial period, and some have even described it as a "colonial attitude" toward linguistic diversity.[10] Yet even as they describe linguistic prejudice as distinctly colonial, many of these same studies root this inequality in 19th-century nationalism, 20th-century education policies, and in modern-day racism. Where, then, does Mexico's current linguistic prejudice come from—the colonial period, the national period, or come combination of the two? What role did the late colonial language regime play in shaping today's linguistic inequality? How did we get from there to here? A brief overview of language policy in the 19th and 20th centuries, followed by a comparison between today's language regime and that of the 18th century, will shed some light on these questions.

As in the late colonial period, language policy lacked cohesion for much of the 19th century, due in part to political turmoil. For much of this period the government switched hands constantly between Liberals, Conservatives, and, for a short time, the Austro-Hungarian monarch Maximilian (installed during the French occupation of Mexico in the mid-1860s). Consequently, few leaders had a chance to put long-term language policies in place. Some politicians (mostly Liberals) sought to teach indigenous peoples Spanish in order to ensure their progress and integration into the nation, while others (primarily Conservatives) believed natives were inherently inferior, and integration therefore a lost cause.

[10] See for instance Justina Olko and John Sullivan, "Toward a Comprehensive Model for Nahuatl Language Research and Revitalization," *Proceedings of the Fortieth Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society* (2014): 378.

By the early 20th century, despite the political stability resulting from Porfirio Díaz's three-and-a-half-decade dictatorship, government officials had still not come to an agreement on the nation's language policy. For instance, in 1910 Díaz proclaimed that indigenous peoples should learn Spanish but should be allowed to retain their own tongues at the same time.[11] Secretary of Education Justo Sierra disagreed, however, contending that "the polyglot state of our country is an obstacle to the extension of our culture and the full formation of the conscience of our fatherland."[12] By 1910, Spanish had acquired a reputation as the language of unity, the national mother tongue of Mexico. Yet no government had determined or implemented a straightforward policy on the matter.

Indigenous languages remained part of ecclesiastical administration in the 19th century but became less important for the Mexican Church than they were in the late colonial period. By the second half of the 19th century, Mexico's seminaries did not always offer courses in indigenous languages, perhaps reflecting the idea that a unified nation required a unified language. Moreover, the few priests who were able to take language classes might not have learned their selected tongues especially well. For instance, one critic in Guadalajara complained in 1891 that students learned Nahuatl as an antiquity rather than as a living language, and thus they never learned to put it to practical use.[13] Nevertheless, 19th-century Mexican priests and scholars published numerous grammars and religious texts in Maya, Nahuatl, Mixtec, Otomi, Tarahumara, and more.

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[11] Heath, *Telling Tongues*, 57-77.
[12] *Ibid*., 77.
[13] Bárbara Cifuentes, *Lenguas para un pasado, huellas de una nación: Los estudios sobre lenguas indígenas de México en el siglo XIX* (México: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2002), 67.

The prevalence of these publications indicates that some priests still used these tongues to communicate with parishioners.[14]

Studies of Mexico's native languages flourished in the 19th century. This occurred not only because clerics continued to use these languages for their parish work, but also because intellectuals saw such scholarship as essential for nation building. Much like the 18th-century Enlightenment intellectuals discussed in Chapter Three, Mexico's post-Independence scholars believed language was a useful tool for studying ethnography. Therefore, as Bárbara Cifuentes has shown, these individuals saw the study of indigenous languages as an essential means for understanding Mexico's peoples, its past, and thus its character as a nation. Linguists like Manuel Orozco y Berra and Francisco Pimentel sought to determine where various indigenous groups came from, how they had developed over time, and whether they had any links to other ethnic groups.[15] Despite the contentions of many political leaders that Mexico's diversity of languages inhibited national unity, these same languages took on new significance as the object of nationalist scientific research.

In the 20th century, Mexican language policy shifted even further towards linguistic homogeneity, due in large part to the influence of *indigenismo* (indigenism) after the Mexican Revolution (1910–1921). Proponents of *indigenismo* extolled the indigenous past as the glorious precursor to the Mexican nation, but did not extend this same appreciation to contemporary native cultures. Instead, these intellectuals believed

[14] *Ibid*., 65.
[15] *Ibid.*, 103-104.

the future of Mexico lay in racial mixing, which would unify the nation. José Vasconcelos, often considered the father of *indigenismo*, believed that indigenous peoples needed to be integrated into the rest of the population by way of education and the Spanish language; he reasoned that indigenous peoples could only feel solidarity with other Mexicans once they shared the same language.[16] Based in part on Vasconcelos's influence, the government passed various laws from 1911-onward that called for programs to teach indigenous peoples Spanish. By the 1940s, anthropologists had determined that the best means of spreading the Spanish language and ensuring indigenous "progress" was to promote bilingual (rather than Spanish-only) education. Although teaching methods and success rates varied over time, in general policymakers pursued this bilingual approach for much of the 20th century, with the goal of teaching indigenous peoples Spanish and incorporating them into the Mexican nation.[17]

Mexico's education system saw a shift in the 1980s and 1990s from this bilingual approach and its goal of linguistic homogeneity, over to a somewhat more plural and tolerant language policy—albeit with hardly promising results. Arising in part from indigenous movements of the 1970s–1990s, many Mexicans began to pursue an "authentic" and multicultural vision of national unity, rather than the more homogeneous version promoted by the political leaders of the early 20th century. G.G. Patthey-Chavez

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[16] Heath, *Telling Tongues*, 88-89 and Margarita Hidalgo, "Language Policy: Past, Present, and Future," in *Mexican Indigenous Languages*, 362.

[17] See Heath, *Telling Tongues*, chapters 5-7. The Summer Institute for Linguistics also advocated the bilingual approach, arguing that the most effective means of integrating natives into the general population was to first make them literate in their own languages, and then introduce them to Spanish. Guillermo Trejo, *Popular Movements in Autocracies: Religion, Repression, and Indigenous Collective Action in Mexico* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 211.

argues that this shift led to an "ethnic revival" in education policy, in which policymakers sought to cultivate and protect the country's native languages. For instance, agencies such as the National Indigenist Institute, the Department of Indigenous Education, and the Department of Popular Cultures worked on developing textbooks and curricular materials in native languages.[18] As of the 1980s, official government policy dictated that indigenous children were to receive schooling in their first languages.[19] In practice, however, the official policies of linguistic pluralism in education laid out in the 1980s have not led to language equality. Teachers have rarely used state-mandated native-language materials, and they have tended to use the indigenous language only as long as needed for students' understanding. In many cases, native-language instruction ceases by the fourth or fifth grade. As a result, indigenous education since the 1980s has only encouraged natives to transition to Spanish.[20]

Despite the overwhelming shift to Spanish among Mexico's indigenous peoples, native tongues experienced something of a resurgence in importance within Mexico's Catholic Church in the 20th century. As Guillermo Trejo has argued, beginning in the 1960s, competition between Protestants and Catholics in heavily indigenous parts of Mexico led the Catholic Church to embrace native languages as a medium of Christian instruction, much as it had done during the colonial period. Beginning in the 1930s,

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[18] G. G. Patthey-Chavez, "Language Policy and Planning in Mexico: Indigenous Language Policy," *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 14 (1994).
[19] Rainer Enrique Hamel, "Indigenous Language Policy and Education in Mexico," in *Encyclopedia of Language and Education, Vol. 1: Language Policy and Political Issues in Education*, 2nd edition, eds. S. May and N. H. Hornberger (Heidelberg: Springer Science & Business Media, 2008) 305.
[20] Hamel, "Indigenous Language Policy and Education," 305 and Trejo, *Popular Movements in Autocracies*, 211.

Presbyterian and Pentecostal missionaries in Mexico translated the Bible into native tongues for potential new converts. In many cases, their strategy successfully attracted indigenous peoples to their religions, and away from Catholicism. For instance, in the 1950s and 1960s missionaries and linguists translated the Bible into Tzeltal; this encouraged many indigenous peoples of the Tzeltal region of northeastern Chiapas to convert to the Presbyterian faith. In areas where the Catholic Church competed with Protestant missionaries for indigenous souls, the Catholic Church began to imitate Protestant linguistic strategies. The 1959 Second Vatican Council (also known as Vatican II) encouraged this Catholic shift by permitting the liturgical use of languages other than Latin. For example, in the 1960s Bishop Samuel Ruíz of Chiapas followed the lead of both Protestant missionaries and Vatican II by encouraging his clerics to use indigenous tongues in Catholic rituals. By the late 1980s, in some heavily indigenous parts of Mexico such as Chiapas, the Catholic Church had become a major promoter of native languages, as well as indigenous rights more broadly.[21] In the late 20th century, even as schooling encouraged Hispanization, native tongues thus became increasingly important to the Church—at least in areas with high indigeneous populations.

## MEXICO'S LANGUAGE REGIME THEN AND NOW

Mexico's language regime has changed significantly since the 18th century. Four major differences separate today's regime from that of three centuries ago. First, today's

[21] Trejo, *Popular Movements in Autocracies.*

discrimination against indigenous languages is inspired primarily by racism. In the 18th century, language ideologies linked native tongues not only with indigenous ethnicity, but also with two kinds of priests: mendicant friars and the clerical proletariat. The Hispanization policies of the late colonial period targeted not only indigenous peoples, but also these two types of priests who seemed to threaten reformers' vision for a revamped Church and state. Although prejudice towards indigenous peoples certainly contributed to these language policies, it was not necessarily the primary motivation. Today, in contrast, native tongues signify race, ethnicity, and/or indigenous cultures above all else. Although native languages are still significant to both the Catholic and Protestant Churches in Mexico, this is only the case in certain areas, and there is no clear evidence that language ideologies link native tongues with any particular kinds of priests. Because native languages are associated almost exclusively with race and ethnicity, racist attitudes towards indigenous peoples have led to similar prejudices toward native tongues. Indigenous peoples have tended to respond to this prejudice by refusing to admit they speak a native language, sometimes ceasing to use their mother tongue altogether.[22]

Second, unlike in the 18th century, indigenous languages are now closely linked with indigenous rights. This occurred over the course of the 20th century, due in part to the influence of indigenous movements, in part to the close association between race and language, and in part because the very notion of language rights as a concept only arose

[22] See for instance Sabina Cruz de la Cruz, "Cihuatequiuh (Women's Work)" in Kelly McDonough, *The Learned Ones: Nahua Intellectuals in Postconquest Mexico* (Tuscon: University of Arizona Press, 2014), 155-156 and 157-158 and John Sullivan, "The IDIEZ Project: A Model for Indigenous Language Revitalization in Higher Education," *Collaborative Anthropologies* 4:1 (2011): 370.

in the 1980s.[23] Until then, neither scholars nor policymakers (in Mexico or elsewhere) were likely to see linguistic equality as a necessary precursor to equality more broadly. This is one of the reasons why Pope Francis's use of Tzotzil in his February 2016 mass in San Cristóbal was so significant: within today's language regime, the Pope's usage and approval of native languages in Catholic ceremonies very clearly implies support for indigenous rights. If a high-ranking ecclesiastic used a native tongue in the 18th century—as many did—it would not have had the same connotation.

Third, legislation is now far more favorable to native language rights, in theory if not in practice. Resulting in part from a global trend toward legislation in favor of minority rights, and in part from Mexican indigenous movements (most notably the Zapatista Army of National Liberation), in 2003 Mexico's General Law on Linguistic Rights of Indigenous Peoples (LGDLPI) went into effect. Among other stipulations regarding the recognition and protection of all native tongues, the new law guaranteed indigenous peoples access to basic education in their own languages.[24] The Mexican government founded the National Institute of Indigenous Languages (INALI) at same time to help establish institutes for the study of native languages, and to enforce the LGDLPI at the state level.[25] Although legislation from the 1980s had allowed for

[23] Hamel, "Indigenous Language Policy and Education," 306.
[24] Dora Pellicer, Bárbara Cifuentes and Carmen Herrera, "Legislating Diversity in Twenty-First Century Mexico," in *Mexican Indigenous Languages at the Dawn of the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Margarita Hidalgo, 127-166.
[25] Olko and Sullivan, "Toward a Comprehensive Model," 378.

linguistic pluralism, the 2003 law shifted from vague tolerance to "a more specific and overt promotion orientation regarding the role of indigenous language[s]."[26]

This recent pro-equality legislation contrasts starkly with many of the royal and ecclesiastical laws of the mid- to late-18th century, especially those influenced by radical proponents of Hispanization such as Archbishop Lorenzana. Although royal policy for the Colegiata guaranteed that indigenous visitors to the institution would have access to Catholic rituals there in Nahuatl, Otomi or Mazahua, this was a far cry from a pronouncement of linguistic equality. Instead, reformers intended for the Colegiata's *lengua* ministers to help usurp indigenous jurisdiction over popular rituals associated with the Virgin of Guadalupe. If anything, royal and ecclesiastical promotion of these languages at the Colegiata *inhibited* indigenous rights. In contrast, policymakers framed LGDLPI in the language of equality and human rights; they promised native-language education because all languages and peoples were equal before the law.

INALI and the LGDLPI have failed to provide the linguistic equality they promised, however. As mentioned above, any move toward the use of native languages in education has for the most part only facilitated the shift to Spanish. Moreover, the stipulations of the 2003 law "ignore the adverse environment faced by [indigenous] languages and the minoritized populations who employ them," and provide very limited resources for overcoming discrimination and a linguistic shift toward Spanish.[27] As a result, the majority of Mexico's indigenous peoples still do not have access to education

[26] Hamel, "Indigenous Language Policy and Education," 306-307.
[27] Pellicer, Cifuentes and Herrera, "Legislating Diversity," 127.

in their own languages. Not all teachers know the local native language, standardized tests occur entirely in Spanish, and textbooks do not exist for every local variant of every indigenous tongue. Moreover, teachers and classmates alike often discriminate against indigenous children for speaking their mother tongues at school, and teachers often encourage parents to speak only Spanish to their children. Higher education occurs exclusively in Spanish, with precious few exceptions.[28] Thus, widespread discrimination against native peoples and languages has prevented LGDLPI from coming anywhere near achieving its goal of providing an equal-opportunity education for native speakers of indigenous tongues.

Finally, indigenous languages have a much smaller role in the public domain now than they did under Bourbon rule. Today, these languages are often relegated to the home, to small, heavily indigenous villages, and to older generations. This is the case even for Nahuatl, Mexico's most commonly spoken native tongue. In the Huasteca region of Veracruz in eastern Mexico, many indigenous youth grow up speaking Nahuatl at home, but quickly switch to Spanish as they discover that their own language does not carry the same cultural capital in class, at work, or in urban areas. As John Sullivan explains, "school teaches them that they must discard their language and culture in order to move up the socioeconomic ladder. Nahuatl is relegated to visits home, while Spanish takes over as the means for developing critical and creative thinking."[29] The available scholarship does not reveal whether 18th-century Nahuas had similar experiences. But at

[28] Olko and Sullivan, "Toward a Comprehensive Model," 378-379.
[29] Sullivan, "The IDIEZ Project," 142.

the very least, knowledge of a native language was a useful and valuable skill that could help a man obtain a job as a priest. Such linguistic knowledge could even occasionally pave the way to high-ranking ecclesiastical positions, such as those at the Colegiata. Thus, unlike today, native languages had a clear socioeconomic utility, at least within the Catholic Church. Nahua youth at the time might have seen little reason to relegate their native tongue to the home, given that this linguistic knowledge could prove useful for certain career paths, and given that priests—men in positions of relative authority—used these languages on a regular basis.

Despite all these substantial differences between Mexico's language regime of the 18th century and that of today, they share two significant similarities. First, ideologies associated with native tongues continue to index social hierarchies. As noted above, today's language ideologies are mostly inspired by racism, because native tongues are linked primarily with indigenous ethnicity, rather than any particular sort of priest. Yet, just as ordination *a título de idioma* marked clerics as poor and undereducated in the 18th century, today many see knowledge of a native tongue as an indicator of supposedly inferior racial status. Moreover, then as now, those who learn a native tongue by choice (rather than by necessity or birth) are often exempt from this inferior status. In the 18th century, well-educated priests sometimes learned a native tongue even though doing so was not necessary for their ordination. Similarly, today linguists, historians and anthropologists sometimes learn languages like Nahuatl out of sheer interest or to further their own careers. Neither the well-educated priests of the past nor the scholars of the present have often suffered from any stigma as a result of speaking an indigenous

language. That shame has instead been relegated to those who had no choice other than to speak a native language: indigenous peoples and the clerical proletariat.

Second, many Mexicans still see their country's diversity of languages as a temporary state on the way to a superior, linguistically unified nation. As I revealed in Chapter Three, this was the attitude of many Bourbon reformers, who believed that natives' inability to speak Spanish held them back and complicated both political and ecclesiastical administration. Archbishop Lorenzana was an especially strong proponent of this idea. Yet the perception that linguistic pluralism was intolerable in the long term only really took hold in New Spain in the 18th century. Until then, most royal and ecclesiastical authorities were satisfied to let indigenous peoples communicate solely in their own tongues. By the mid-18th century, on the other hand, even the reformers who disagreed with Lorenzana's radical version of Hispanization often saw linguistic diversity as a barrier to progress that they would eventually need to eliminate. The notion that linguistic diversity is only a temporary state lasted throughout the 19th and 20th centuries as a central tenet of nationalism and *indigenismo*, and still persists today among many Mexicans, despite legislation in favor of linguistic equality.[30]

To return to the questions I posed earlier: How colonial is linguistic inequality? Is today's widespread prejudice against native tongues a vestige of colonialism? My research indicates that while modern-day linguistic inequality does indeed have roots in the colonial period, it is not simply a holdover from the days of Spanish rule. Indigenous

[30] Olko and Sullivan, "Toward a Comprehensive Model," 370 and José Antonio Flores Farfán, "The Use of Multimedia and the Arts in Language Revitalization, Maintenance and Development," in *Indigenous Languages Across the Community*, eds. Barbara Burnaby and Jon Reyhner (Flagstaff: Northern Arizona University Press, 2002), 228.

languages did not automatically come to signify inferiority, backwardness, or inutility as soon as the Spanish completed their conquest in 1521. Instead, this language ideology developed gradually, over the course of both the colonial and national periods. As mentioned above, there were some critical differences between today's language regime and that of the 18th century. Today, native languages suffer from their direct association with racism and their relegation to home and village life, but neither was the case in the late colonial period. The idea that native tongues were antithetical to progress was new in the 18th century and would not immediately take hold throughout society. These languages were so deeply ingrained in the colonial infrastructure and public life that such ideas could not immediately relegate linguistic pluralism to the past. The general Mexican population probably did not perceive native languages as inferior, backwards or lacking applicability to modern life until the 20th century.

Rather than a persistent vestige of colonialism, scholars might more accurately portray modern-day linguistic inequality as a distant descendant of the 18th-century language regime—the result of three centuries of gradually shifting language policies and ideologies. Some of the earliest signs of today's linguistic prejudice are visible in the 18th-century language regime: laws ordering the extirpation of native tongues; language use as a marker of socioeconomic status; the notion that monolingualism was critical for unity and progress. Indigenous languages certainly began to acquire their negative connotations in the late colonial period, as the Spanish Enlightenment took hold among royal and ecclesiastical authorities. Yet the Bourbon language reforms only marked the beginning of a long journey to the 21st-century's particular brand of linguistic

discrimination. Colonial rule did not shape or define today's language regime; it was merely one of many steps along the way.

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| AGI | Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain<br>Collections: México, Guatemala |
| AGN | Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico City<br>Collections: Bandos, Bienes Nacionales (BN), Clero Regular y Secular (CRS), Indiferente Virreinal (IV), Reales Cédulas Originales (RCO), Historia |
| AHAM | Archivo Histórico del Arzobispado de México, Mexico City<br>Collections: Base Colonial (BC), Fondo Episcopal (FE) |
| Bancroft | Bancroft Library, The University of California at Berkeley |
| BN | Biblioteca Nacional at the Universidad Autónoma de México, Mexico City<br>Collections: Archivo Franciscano (AF) |
| BNAH | Biblioteca Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City<br>Collections: Fondo Franciscano (FF), Fondo Jesuita (FJ) |

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